

Series: *Titus: The Gospel for Godly Living*
Lesson: *Give Them Graciousness*
Text: Titus 3:1–8 (L6)
Date: Sunday, December 18, 2011

Colonial Hills
Baptist Church

Key



= Teacher Information



= Discussion Starter

Series: *Titus: The Gospel for Godly Living*
Lesson: *Give Them Graciousness*
Text: Titus 3:1–8 (L6)
Date: Sunday, December 18, 2011

Colonial Hills
Baptist Church



TEACHING TIPS

- Read through these notes several times before you teach. However, when you teach, don't read these notes verbatim to your table. Develop your own bulleted, "key word/phrase" outline. Perhaps go paragraph by paragraph through these notes and summarize each one's main point with a key phrase or two. Then teach from your own outline.
- Maintain good eye contact with those at your table, especially when you are explaining something.

INTRODUCTION

In Titus 3:1-8, Paul continues the theme that believers should behave in such a way that fits their profession and adorns their Savior. However, chapter 3 seems to stress how a believer should live before the world. This is suggested in verse 3 by three grammatical clues.¹ Titus 2:2-10 speaks to the general transformation of life that believers should be cooperating with, but does so with an emphasis on their interaction with other believers within the church.² Now, Paul moves outside the church to demonstrate how believers should be known in their communities.

In keeping with our wardrobe illustration, sometimes we can wear the right garments, although they are made with the wrong material. For example, burlap looks great as a bag or some kind of home décor, but it is an odd material for a wedding dress. If a seamstress were to design her most beautiful wedding dress, yet make it using burlap or denim, we would immediately recognize a disconnect between the type of garment and the type of material.

Similarly, believers may wear the right kind of clothes—the godly, gospel-made garments of Titus 2:2-10—but do so with the wrong motives, attitude, emphases, etc. When that happens, their garments are shown to be made from the wrong material. This problem is especially seen when believers

¹ (1) The first person plural personal pronoun is used in addition to the inherent pronominal subject of the verb, creating emphasis—i.e., "we ourselves"—and comparing "us" with those described in verse 3 (i.e., the foolish, disobedient, deceived, etc.). (2) The Greek word *pote*, translated "sometimes" (KJV), "once" (NET, ESV, NASB, NKJV), or "at one time" (NIV), demonstrates that we were formerly different from what we are now (cf. *hote* in v. 4), similar to the contrast between Ephesians 2:1-3 and 2:4. We *used to be* just like those described in verse 3—i.e., the wicked, unbelieving world. (3) The use of *kai* likens us to those described in verse 3—i.e., they are foolish, disobedient, deceived, etc.; we used to be that way, "too."

² Seen, for example, in the charge to the older women to teach the younger (vv. 3-4) and in the admonition for the younger men to be examples.

interact with a wicked society round about them. In our desire for distinct godliness and our disgust for the base ungodliness around us, it's easy to become brusque, contentious, and condemning toward those who are unsaved. Such a response betrays the improper fabric of our wardrobe. For example, the Fred Phelps family demonstrates a desire for distinction and separation, but they do so in such a belligerent, caustic, and ugly manner that unbelievers are not attracted to godliness and the gospel. Just as burlap or denim isn't appropriate for a wedding dress, so belligerence and brashness isn't appropriate for a believer.³

Therefore, the fabric (or *flavor*, to change the metaphor) of our life is as important as its character. We must not only be distinctly godly; we must also be distinctly godly in the right way.

How do unbelievers know you? What is the fabric and flavor of your life? With your spirit, demeanor, countenance, and attitude, are you attracting people to the gospel, as the smell of a good meal attracts hungry children to the kitchen? As you evangelistically live a godly and distinct life, are you doing so with a spirit of grace and humility that further authenticates and highlights your message? A grace-filled demeanor best "fits" a believer's profession and practice, and a gracious flavor of life best adorns the Savior.

³ "In reaction to the rapid and pervasive escalation of immorality and ungodliness, believers have become both saddened and angered. Hostility among some of them has been intensified still further when they learn that their taxes are being used to fund ideas and practices that only a few generations ago were condemned even by most secularists. They fear for their children and even more for their grandchildren because of the kind of world into which they will be born, educated, and have to live. Many well-meaning Christian leaders have founded organizations to counteract anti-Christian influences and assaults. Attempting to fight fire with fire, as it were, Christian organizations, publishers, and broadcasters have sought to counter anti-Christian ideas and programs by using non-Christian tactics. They have decided it is time to stand up for their "rights" and have declared war on the prevailing non-Christian culture, especially the liberal national media. They have become hostile to unbelievers, the very ones God has called them to love and reach with the gospel. But neither the New Testament nor the example of the early church justifies such a mentality. The cause of Christ cannot be protected or expanded by social intimidation any more than by government decree or military conquest. Ours is a spiritual warfare against human ideologies and beliefs that are set up against God and that can only be successfully conquered with the weapon of the Word (see 2 Cor. 10:3-5)...As this passage in Titus and many others in the New Testament make clear, we must not become so engulfed in trying to force social behavior to conform to our standards that we become enemies of those our Lord has called us to win to Himself. We must reject sin and never compromise God's standards of righteousness. But we also must never engage in defamation and denigration of the lost sinners who make up our corrupt culture. When Christians become political, sinners become the enemy instead of the mission field....Really changing society starts when a Christian's moral and spiritual concern is for his own virtue and godliness. It is our righteous attitude and conduct that make us not only more pleasing to the Lord but more pleasing to the unsaved. It is righteous living that makes the saving message of the gospel believable to the lost. If we claim to be saved from sin but still live sinful lives, our preaching and teaching, no matter how orthodox, is likely to fall on deaf ears" (MacArthur, MacArthur. *Titus*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1996. Pp. 136-38.).

So, in Titus 3:1-8 Paul adds one more distinguishing characteristic to the wardrobe of believers—our lifestyle should be godly, gospel-made, and *gracious*. As we study the fabric of our wardrobe in these verses, we'll first state each main point and then summarize it by asking and answering a question.

THE PRACTICE OF GRACIOUSNESS (vv. 1-2)

Q – How should we live out our godliness before the wicked?

A – We should live graciously.

In our study through Titus 2, we discovered that we are God's marketers, entrusted the the mission of adorning our Savior. We are the evidence of our message, for as our lips share the glories of salvation, our lives should be showing those realities. Therefore, the flavor of our life is as important as the details of our lifestyle. So, Paul charges Titus in Titus 3:1-2,

Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

These verses depict what is the best atmosphere or aroma of distinction, what is the best fabric for godliness. Simply put, we should live graciously.⁴

First, we are to be "subject to principalities and powers." We ought to be subordinate to and submissive to our authorities. The word "subject" is the same word used to depict the subjection of demons to Christ and His disciples (Luke 10:17), the subordination of all things under Christ (I Corinthians 15:27-28; Hebrews 2:8), and the submission of slaves to their masters (Titus 2:9). This is the word that characterized Christ Himself in His relationship to His parents (Luke 2:51). "Principalities"⁵ are those who initiate or who take leadership in a process or activity; the word "powers" highlights their authority or right to rule, for they have been ordained of God (Hebrews 13:1-2). Therefore, in our roles as earthly citizens, we must be "obedient" to our rulers insofar as they don't demand violation to God's Word (Acts 4:19; 5:29). Whether it be in the paying of taxes, the giving of honor, or the manifestation of a healthy fear, Paul frequently challenged believers with their need to be subordinate and obedient to their civil leaders, who are God's ministers (Hebrews 13:1-7).

⁴ If grace is "unmerited favor," then graciousness is a display of that unmerited favor in one's interactions, attitude, demeanor, responses, etc.

⁵ From *arche*, meaning "beginning."

Secondly, Christians should be “ready to every good work.” The word “ready” is used in passages addressing our expectancy for Christ’s return (cf. Matthew 24:44; 25:10) and teaches us that we should be just as prepared to do good to those in this wicked world with whom our lives intersect. Galatians 6:10 instructs us, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” MacArthur explains, “We are to be known for what might be described as consistent aggressive goodness, done not simply out of duty but out of love for our Lord and for other people.”⁶



How do we balance the call for readiness in doing good works with the warning against the social gospel movement? (1) *This good-works readiness is individually reminded here, not corporately mandated;* (2) *the purpose and theology of the social gospel movement misses the point;* (3) *gospel good-works are for the purpose of adorning and proclaiming the gospel (cf. Paul’s mission statement in 1:14 and 2:1-24)*⁷

Thirdly, we must “speak evil of no man.” *BDAG* defines this word as meaning “to speak in a disrespectful way that demeans, denigrates, maligns.”⁸ Paul was frequently the target of such slander (cf. Romans 3:8; I Corinthians 4:13; 10:30). Such speech—verbalized or written—is often justified under the guise of exposing a fraud, pointing out a deceiver, or condemning a hypocrite. However, our passage uses a clear Greek word to teach that such speech is never appropriate, for we are to “speak evil of *no man*.” We are never excused to slander a person, malign his character, or treat him with contempt. This applies to the arrogant and hypocritical believer in the church and the hostile enemy of Christianity in our government. When we slander others, we put God’s Word and His gospel in danger of being slandered by them (cf. Titus 2:5; Romans 14:16; II Peter 2:2), and we have injured the evangelistic mission that God has entrusted to us.

Forthly, the church must be peaceable. “Non-fighters” is a literal rendition of the word translated “no brawlers.” We must reject anger and hostility towards the wickedness that we see around us. This verse echoes Paul’s admonition in Romans 12:18, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” This often means that we must give up a spirit of vengeance (cf.



These first four areas of graciousness are often ignored when it comes to our political and societal considerations. Understanding the need for gracious godliness, (1) how should we consider social reform? (2) how should we regard those with whom we disagree?

⁶ MacArthur, p. 142.

⁷ For a helpful discussion on why believers should do good works, cf. DeYoung, Kevin, “Why Then Must We Still Do Good?” posted on 12/15/11 on his *The Gospel Coalition* blog at <http://bit.ly/vgTIAo>.

⁸ Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. P. 178.

Romans 12:19-21) and always demands that we have the burden of love for this world that God has (Romans 5:6-10). “If God so limitlessly and unconditionally loved the world that He sent His sinless Son to redeem it, how can we, as sinful recipients of His redeeming grace, be callous and loveless toward those who have not yet received it?”⁹

On the contrary, fifthly, we should be “gentle.” *BDAG* describes this term as “not insisting on every right of letter of law or custom; yielding, gentle, kind, courteous, tolerant.”¹⁰ This gentleness flows from a heavenly wisdom that is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17). The importance of a genuine heart of humility toward the lost is underscored by this characteristic (cf. Philippians 2:3).

Finally, believers should “show all meekness to all men.” Once again, we go to *BDAG* for a starting-point understanding of this word: “the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance; gentleness, humility, courtesy, considerateness, meekness.”¹¹ It would be easy to argue from Scripture that this word is what should be the defining flavor of genuine believers (cf. Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:12; II Timothy 2:25; James 3:13; I Peter 3:15), for this was the flavor of Christ’s life (Matthew 11:29; II Corinthians 10:1). “Described negatively...[*prautēs*] is the opposite of self-assertiveness and self-interest; it is equanimity of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because it is not occupied with self at all.”¹²



The passage has stressed slandering “no man” and showing meekness to “all men” without exception. Who are some types of people with whom these mandates are particularly difficult to practice?

Application: “As followers and imitators of Jesus Christ, our calling is not to fight for our rights or privileges against the ungodly. Rather, as we live in this corrupt world in subjection and obedience to human authority, doing good deeds, maligning no one, and being uncontentious, gentle, and meek, we will thereby demonstrate the gracious power of God to transform sinners and make them like Himself.”¹³ The theme of gracious godliness is regularly taught throughout Scripture as calling believers to live the right way (godliness) in the right way (graciousness). Cf. Philippians 2:1-4; James 3:13-18; I Peter 3:8-16

Transition: After reading verses 1-2, it’s easy to find some other questions on our minds—“Don’t unbelievers need me to be blunt and black-and-white?”

⁹ MacArthur, p. 142.

¹⁰ Arndt, p. 371.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 861.

¹² W. E. Vine quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 143.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

They won't wake up to their own wickedness unless I shun and disdain them, right? Isn't a message of hellfire and brimstone best suited to shake them up? If I love them, won't they miss the fact that they are condemned? Isn't it best to fight their fire of wickedness with the fire of conviction? How do I know that the fabric of graciousness will not simply be taken advantage of and torn to shreds by the wicked? Won't such graciousness give them a continued excuse for lasciviousness? Will a grace-laced flavor of life really attract them to the Gracious One Himself?" Paul answers those questions in verses 3-7.

THE POWER OF GRACIOUSNESS (vv. 3-7)

Q – How will such graciousness penetrate their wickedness?

A – We are living proof of the effectiveness of grace.

In verses 3-7, Paul shows that a manifestation of graciousness was sufficient enough to bring us to Christ, and it continues to be powerful enough an agent of conviction to draw others to salvation (cf. Romans 2:4).

1. **We used to be the “wicked” (v. 3).**

Why should we be so courteous and kind towards those who are so evil? The first part of Paul's answer in verse 3 is that we used to be one of those evil ones.

We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

This is not a pretty picture. We used to be overwhelmingly wicked ourselves! We were ignorant and devoid of the knowledge of God (cf. Romans 1:28; I Corinthians 1:20, 25), rebellious (cf. Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 15:19-20; Titus 1:16), deceived (II Timothy 3:13; Hebrews 3:10; I Peter 2:25; I John 1:8), enslaved to earthly desires and wicked pleasures (Luke 8:14; Romans 6:19; James 4:1, 3), given to malice and envy (Ephesians 4:31; I Peter 2:1), loathsome, and filled with hate (John 7:7). We were absolutely no better than those we encounter now who have yet to taste the graciousness of God (cf. Romans 3:9-20; I Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 2:1-2). And, “but for the grace of God, there go I”—except for God's gracious intervention, we would still be in those depraved ranks.

Therefore, we can be gracious to even the ugliest of people, because we used to be just as ugly. As John Newton put it late in his life, “Although my memory's fading, I remember two things very clearly: I am a great sinner, and Christ is a great Savior.” Indeed, that statement brings us to the second part of Paul's answer. We can be assured that graciousness is able to penetrate the wickedness of this world because (1) we used to be just as wicked and separated from God in our hearts and lives, and (2) it was the gracious work of God that changed us.

2. **God's gracious work changed us (vv. 4-7).**

God's hate didn't lead us to salvation, nor did His active judgment; His condemnation and wrath may have convicted us, but those realities didn't melt our heart to repent. He wasn't belligerent and calloused in His interactions with us; He didn't defame us and cast us off before the time. No, “not willing that any should perish,” He was longsuffering (II Peter 3:9), and it was “the goodness¹⁴ of God [that] leadeth thee to repentance” (Romans 2:4). In Titus 3:4-5, it is worded this way, “But [when] the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared...He saved us.” So, when it comes to those who are still wicked and enemies of God, we don't have to take matters into our own hands; we don't have to be condemning, caustic, or belligerent so that the wicked don't miss the point; we can simply live a gracious life that whets their appetite for the saving grace of God.

In our own personal experience, we discovered that God's grace took care of every facet of our salvation. When we were at our lowest, lost in the debauchery and destitution of sin (v. 3), God's graciousness penetrated our hearts and transformed our lives (vv. 4-7). Five aspects of God's gracious salvation are delineated for us in verses 4-7.

(1) *The motivation of salvation (v. 4)* – God's “kindness” and “love,” made incarnate when Jesus Christ “appeared,” were the motivation behind God's saving work (cf. Luke 6:35; John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4).

(2) *The basis of salvation (v. 5)* – God's gracious work is in no way borne out of our own self-righteous works (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9), for those are no better than attempting to use filthy rags to clean a house (cf. Isaiah 64:6). Nothing about us forms the basis for God's plan of salvation. We didn't have to transform ourselves before God took us seriously; we didn't have to clean up our act before God's loving grace kicked into effect. Rather, He was simply kindly and compassionately intended to provide salvation generally and apply it to us specifically (cf. Matthew 9:36; Ephesians 1:5). God's salvation flows from His own mercy—His compassion concern for His wayward creation that actively planned for their redemption even when they were His enemies.



If God's salvation of us was in no way based on our own self-reformation, then what does that teach me about the way we should regard those who “don't act like us”? *We should love them where they are and minister to their need.* What is wrong with simply trying to change the way they live? *It makes them externally like us, but internally they are still separated from God and lost in their sins.*

¹⁴ Same word translated “kindness” in Titus 3:4.


- (3) *The agency of salvation (vv. 5-6)* – “Jesus Christ” is the Agent of salvation, for “there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time” (I Timothy 2:5-6). Thus, He is our “Savior.” Through His saving work in life and in death, He accomplished “abundant” and eternal salvation for those who believe. Because He became sin for us (II Corinthians 5:21), we may experience the “washing” of the new birth (i.e., “regeneration”) and the recreative “renewal” of the Holy Spirit. We have new life through Christ!
- (4) *The result of salvation (v. 7)* – Because we were in fact cleansed by Christ and renewed by His Spirit, we were declared righteous by God (i.e., “justified”) and forever accepted into His presence. This was all of “His grace.” We had no part in that positional change and resulting verdict.
- (5) *The goal of salvation (v. 7)* – The goal of this incredibly gracious activity of God our Savior is nothing short of adoption into His family (i.e., “be made heirs”) throughout all ages (i.e., “the hope of eternal life”). This is the everlasting glory to which we have been exalted in Christ!

We contributed nothing to our salvation and transformation; it was the graciousness of God that initiated, continued, cultivated, and climaxed our salvation. We are distinguished from the wicked, not because of anything within ourselves; before we experienced God’s grace, we didn’t desire godly distinction, and we could never achieve it if we had. There was nothing in us that made us a worthy candidate for salvation, except that we were the most unworthy. And Christ died for the unworthy (cf. II Corinthians 8:9), by His grace alone, unworthy and ugly people are eternally redeemed and transformed. We are living proof of the power of God’s gracious activity! And His grace alone, “re-appearing” in the lives of gracious believers, is effective enough to melt the calloused heart and transform the wicked soul.

Application: Some before whom we dress distinctly and graciously are undoubtedly quite offensive. Many times, they are the direct opposite of the graciousness to which we are called in verses 1-2 and look a lot more like verse 3—some are authoritarian, powerful, arrogant, and caustic; some are aggressive, violent, and abusive; some are selfish and manipulative; others are foolish, rebellious, blind, enslaved, profligate, malicious, cruel, debauched, and loathesome. No matter how ugly they may look to us, this passage takes away from us any right or reason to be the same in response to them. We must live out God’s grace, for that alone can change their ugly hearts. They are not just calloused; they are blind. They are not just debauched; they are separated from God. We need to temper our disgust toward their sin with a gracious love for the sinner. And this passage gives us hope to do so, for God can work in the

hardest of lives. We’re proof of that—for we “too” were wicked, “but” now we’ve been made righteous through the gracious activity of Christ!

When God’s grace appeared, sin and death were defeated for all those who would believe. When God’s gracious kindness and love appeared to us personally and we believed, we experienced His everlasting salvation change us from wicked to righteous, from estranged to beloved. That same kind love needs to be manifested to those who are still lost in their sins, and we need to be the “re-appearance” of God’s gracious saving activity to them. We need to be the “re-incarnation” of God’s grace, and that is best displayed in a lifestyle of graciousness. They may not deserve God’s favor; neither did we! Therefore, as we received lavish grace, we should pass it on by living graciously. Since it was not God’s wrath, but rather His grace that led us to salvation, we should practice that same strategy. Godly, gospel-made, gracious works are the best strategy to lead the detestable to salvation, for we’ve already seen their power in our own salvation.

 Who can we be specifically targeting with graciousness this next week/month/year (cf. I Peter 3:1-4)?

If we find ourselves still prejudiced against the wicked; if we find ourselves still feeling disgusted and expressing scorn as we pass by those who are still without Christ; if we discover our hearts moved, not with compassion, but with repulsion, when we interact with the lost—then, we’ve not fully grasped the reality of our own experience in Christ described in verses 3-7. We need to meditate long upon our own personal tasting of the grace of God (cf. I Peter 2:1-2). We need to recognize that we’ve been forgiven much, so that we may be enabled to love much (cf. Luke 7:36-50).

CONCLUSION

To summarize everything we’ve been learning in Titus 2:1-3:7—God-honoring, Christ-adorning, and disciple-making salvation-living is wearing the godly garments that are ours in Christ (i.e., “gospel made”) in a spirit of graciousness. So, Paul wraps up that entire discussion by stating in verse 8, “This saying [vv. 4-7] is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on such truths, so that those who have placed their faith in God may be intent on engaging in good works. These things are good and beneficial for all people” (NET).

We were saved as a result of the most gracious of works—the life and death of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. The manifestation of such grace in the gracious lives of Jesus’ followers has the same “good and beneficial” potential. Are you wearing the right garments in the right fabric? Are people being attracted to God’s grace because they smell it when they get around you? Do people know you as kind or caustic, meek or malicious, full of pity or full of pessimism? When it comes to your interactions with the wicked world around you, are you giving them graciousness?

The “re-appearing” of God’s grace through us to others will become a reality only as we “insist on such [gospel] truths” in our own thoughts and behaviors. So, we should preach the gospel to ourselves regularly so that with John Newton we would never forget two most-important truths: “I am a great sinner, but Christ is a great Savior!” May we be committed to godliness, but be graced to do so in a spirit of graciousness.