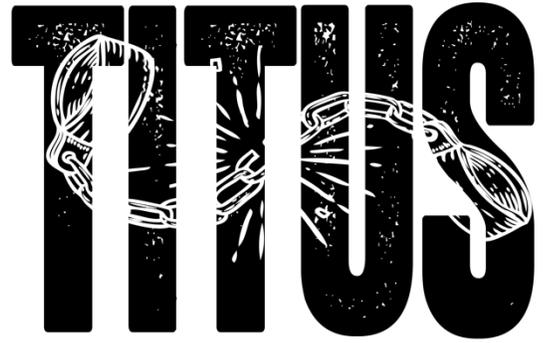


March 8, 2020 | DAVID ANDERSON

Grace Makes Us Gracious
Titus 3:1-2



Have you ever been to a wedding reception, birthday party or anniversary party where the host family has made it one memorable night? No expense is spared and all the guests are comfortable and happy. The food is terrific, the drinks are wonderful, and each guest receives a special little present from the host that is meaningful. All the littlest details are cared for and thought through. Everyone departs into the night filled with the warmth that comes from someone else's lavish generosity. What an experience!

Let's take that same scenario and add a twist to it. Let's say all the guests at the party not too long ago had been extremely critical of the host, even antagonistic. These same guests who were invited even plotted to take the host down socially or somehow boycott his business. They were His enemies in a very real sense.

The great scandal of those invitations was that a host determined to be generous even to those who were against him. Who would invite a bunch of miserable, negative and self-serving guests like that? It appears that's exactly what God has done.

Paul tells Titus that the God of the universe has sent out his guest list, and guess what? You and I are on the guest list! Paul puts it this way, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men" (2:11). The turning point in history, the turning point in your personal history was the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the moment where the generous and powerful love of God was revealed.

The great scandal of the New Testament was that the guest list wasn't those who were the obvious guests, well qualified by their rich spiritual history or well qualified by their holiness of life to celebrate in His presence. No such people exist. The invitations were sent out to those who were sick, those who were broken, those who were crippled by sin. They were sent to those with hearts that were seething, full of lust and twisted desires that have led to ugly, angry and hateful behavior - not the sort of people you'd expect God to invite to His party.

Paul identifies something spectacular that happens when we are transformed by a generous, loving and good God. Grace begets grace. Grace makes us gracious. God makes us gracious in the most difficult circumstances. God turns self-centered and self-absorbed hearts into hearts that are ready for every good work. God's grace makes us peaceful, gentle and humble in the most painful circumstances.

¹ Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work,² to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.

(Titus 3:1-2)

Crete was conquered by the Romans around 67 BC and it was filled with agitation, tension and potential rebellion. Political revolution was always in the air; violence was always spilling over. The sight of a Roman soldier triggered the people in Crete. Before Jesus, the Cretans were mercenaries, pirates and self-governed. After Jesus, Paul calls them to be subject and obey the Roman authorities and be ready for every good work.

Paul is writing this in to Titus in 63 AD. This is in the middle of when Nero is literally turning insane and he targets Christians. Tacitus says the Christians are used as scapegoats for the great fire in Rome and Nero inflicted the "most exquisite tortures" on the them (Annals 15.44). Within months of Paul writing these words, Paul is beheaded in Rome under the reign of Nero. Paul knows that his trials will probably end in unjust execution (2 Tim. 4:6), and yet He still calls these new Christians to be subject to godless rulers and authorities (see also Rom. 13:1-7; see also Peter in 1 Pet. 2:13-17).

We as disciples of Jesus must play our part politically, and it is a huge part in the United States. At some point we might have to "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29) and perhaps suffer punishment from the government, but our normal action towards our government is to be subject and obey. Paul says that Christians need to be ready and willing to do whatever good works need to be done. This is a huge theme in the Book of Titus (1:16, 2:7, 14, 3:1, 8, 14). The flesh wants to be belligerent, slander, defame and revile. Paul says grace makes us gracious. Don't speak evil of any one, be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.

QUESTIONS FOR THE WEEK:

1. Even in this 2020 election year, how is your Savior asking you to obey and be subject to your rulers and authorities?
2. How can you prepare your heart for action when God presents a good work for you to walk in?
3. Is there someone you are speaking evil about that you need to cease and desist?
4. What does it look like for you to pursue peace and gentleness, showing all humility to all men this week?

Grace makes you gracious. Jesus' peace makes you peaceful. Our gentle and humble Savior gives us a fighting chance to be gentle and humble people in some of the most difficult circumstances.