

## HOW YOUR LIFE CAN MODEL THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

Teaching Through Titus Verse by Verse - Part eleven

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### TWO REMINDERS WE NEED AND DON'T USUALLY APPRECIATE

**Titus 3:1-7** - "Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, [2] to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. [3] For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. [4] But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, [5] he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, [6] whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, [7] so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

I think we can see the shift in Paul's emphasis in this third chapter. Up until this point he has been assigning Scriptural duties by *breaking the congregation down into specific ages and genders*. Obviously, Paul felt this was the best way for Titus to make God's principles of behavior *clear and specific* to each person in the church.

But now Paul wants to emphasize general spiritual principles that are so important and inclusive they must be ingrained into the hearts of *all who want to follow Jesus and inherit eternal life*. In fact, Paul is about to articulate three principles, apart from which, the Christian life is an impossibility. That's how important these principles are.

#### 1) IT IS CRUCIAL THAT EVERY CHRISTIAN UNDERSTAND HOW THE POWER OF DIVINE TRUTH CONNECTS WITH THE HUMAN MIND

**Titus 3:1** - "Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work...."

I just want to ponder those first two words for a minute - "Remind them..." Wuest's Expanded Translation says, "Be constantly reminding them..." The Old King James says, "Put them in remembrance..." And it's a point so obvious, it's easily missed. What you have *heard* has nothing whatsoever to do with how spiritual you are going to be. What you have *learned*, in itself, has nothing whatsoever to do with how spiritual you are going to be. It's what you *remember* that will save and insure your eternal destiny.

It's only very recently in Christian perception that we would even think that we were somehow not responsible for our remembrance of Scriptural truth. That's because we don't have to work as hard at remembering things as we once did. Technology does so much of the act of remembering *for* us. You sync your iCalendar and reminders pop up telling you where you have to go next. You don't even have to remember the address. Your phone dials your contacts for you. You have to *enter* the phone number once, but you don't have to *remember* it. And your GPS will take you where you want to go. You don't have to panic about the street name or address, just so long as you can read or hear the instructions.

Now enter your walk with Jesus. Did you know the Bible says it's a *sin* to forget God's Word? It's true: **James 1:25** - "But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing."

So we see that truth *read*, or truth *heard* carries no promised blessing with it. The power of the truth to liberate and transform the life comes through its *attachment to the heart through the memory*. There is no program that will do this for you. Only your own *mind* can call up Biblical precept or warning or example at specific points of temptation or trial. Unremembered truth is useless truth.

Let me give you another example - perhaps the most famous example of forgetfulness in human history: **Matthew 26:31-35, 74-75** - "Then Jesus said to them, 'You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' [32] But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." [33] Peter answered him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away." [34] Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." [35] Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same....74-75....Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the rooster crowed. [75] And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, 'Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly."

Consider this idea. What if Peter had *remembered* the words of Jesus, *unprompted* by the rooster's crowing. What if he had held Jesus' words - repeating them to himself - when he was first questioned about his relationship with Jesus?

Peter did many things *right* that night. He certainly loved Jesus. He followed Him more deeply into the agony of the cross than many of the others. He *wanted* to follow Jesus. But Peter *forgot the warning of Jesus until it was too late*. Forgetfulness is always the mother of sin.

In **Matthew 16** Jesus is in the boat with His disciples after just feeding the 5000. He warns His disciples of the *leaven of the Pharisees*. They don't get what He is talking about. They think Jesus is mad because they have forgotten to bring bread with them on this trip. They are totally blind as to what Jesus is trying to teach them. Why? Are they just dense? Are they just not capable of learning what Jesus is teaching? No. That's not the problem. Jesus puts His finger on the problem in **verse 9** - "Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember

*the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered?"*

Now, they **knew** about the feeding of the 5000. They could call it to memory very easily once Jesus mentioned it. But they had fallen into the habit of watching and listening to Jesus without **dwelling on what He was doing**. They weren't **thinking** about the things they had just seen Jesus do. They were **with** Jesus all the time. But they weren't **remembering - concentrating** on what He was saying and doing. The **event** passed. And so did their **reflection** on what they had seen. They weren't **connecting** past lessons with current situations. They left what they had already learned and encountered sleeping on the floor of the past.

So Jesus says, **"You need to bring those things to your remembrance if you're going to have spiritual understanding and growth! You build the future of your spiritual growth by remembering the things of the past."**

Let me ask you this question: **What do you do to remember the things you hear from God's Word?** "Well, Pastor Don, I go to church every Sunday. And I even come on Sunday night!" That's good. But that's what you do to **hear** God's Word. That has nothing to do with the question I asked. I'm asking what do you do to **remember** what you have heard? What do you do to keep those truths alive and warm in your mind and heart? What have you been reminding yourself about all week long from last Sunday morning or night?

In 1619 Reverend Thomas Taylor wrote these powerful words in his commentary on Titus: **"If we count the Lord's testimonies wonderful, as David did, our souls, like his, shall keep them. Many come to church, and for fashion sit for an hour, and give some attention; but they have no *delight* in it, and therefore *remember* little of it. Other things they can remember - the sins of their youth, the mad pursuit of pleasure, the state of their wealth - but not a lesson delivered from God's Word yesterday. The reason is because they *delight* in the one and not the other."**

**"Perform the duties of meditation on the Word very carefully, and although you cannot remember every particular detail you hear, yet God, by His Spirit, will fasten as much in your memory as shall be necessary for you to practice, and sufficient for your comfort in time of need. But if *now*, in your *prosperity*, you shall allow the things of this earth to take up your senses, it shall be just with God, in the day of your *distress*, to leave you without the comfort of one place of Scripture because you did not take it up into your memory when you *could*, you shall not be able when you anxiously *desire* it."**

This is profound thinking. Taylor is saying my ability to **hear God's voice in the time of darkness and confusion** is directly related to my **willingness to commit God's truth to memory when no apparent need is pressing**. And this is the constant emphasis of the Scriptures:

**Proverbs 4:20-22 - "My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.[21] Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.[22] For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh."**

So what do you do to **remember** the truths you have learned? Do you take and review notes? Do you discuss these things with Christian friends? Do you listen to the Bible online? Do you take one promise and one command each day and review them three times during the day?

Paul implores young Titus - **"Titus, you set the people to putting these things to remembrance! Forgotten truth is useless truth."** All of this leads into the second point: **What were the people to remember first of all?**

## 2) **THE PEOPLE WERE TO REMEMBER TO HAVE HUMBLE, SUBMISSIVE HEARTS TO ALL AUTHORITY**

**Titus 3:1-2 - "Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, [2] to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people."**

The **last** part of those verses isn't much of a surprise but the **first** part certainly is. We can easily understand the need to be **gentle** and **courteous**. But who would have thought the very first thing Paul would say Christians need to remember is to be **submissive to rulers?** Why is **that** the first thing Paul instructs Titus to have the people remember?

Look at some of the graces Paul mentions in **verses one and two**. The people are to be **submissive, obedient, courteous (speaking evil of no one)**, and **gentle**. I think we could put all of those things under the umbrella of **humility**. Paul wants the people in the church to live life with a humble mind and heart.

But I think humility, like love, isn't something we come by naturally. Pride comes more naturally than humility. That means humility has to be **learned**. **Humility** is learned like **love** is learned. The Apostle John tells us that we all have an easy time **saying** how much we love God. We do it with Bible verses. We do it with worship choruses and hymns. We do it in our prayers.

But John says that's not how love is learned. Love for our **invisible God** is learned and expressed by **loving visible people** - **1 John 4:20** - **"If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love**

### God whom he has not seen.”

Love is learned as it is **practiced** and **expressed**. Humility is exactly the same. We all know it’s proper and important to be humble before **God** - **“If my people will humble themselves and pray...”** We’re not stupid. We know how great God is and how appropriate humility is before Him. The question is, **how do we become humble people?**

Like growing in love, we start in the **school of humility**, not with the **invisible God**, but with **visible people**. Children **learn** to submit to God by being taught to submit to their parents. Parents learn to humbly submit to God by the attitude they show to leaders and authorities over them - **even imperfect leaders**.

If I’m not humble enough to **submit my way to my brother** (even if I think I’m smarter than he) then I’ll never learn how to **humbly submit to my Creator**. This is why parents who are lazy in teaching their children - even their very **young** children - to respect their authority do more than just make life miserable when shopping with them or eating lunch in a restaurant. They make it impossible for those children to submit to **God**.

And when we take it as our natural response to stick up constantly for our rights in a society like ours we condition ourselves to lack of submission to God as well. This is the **greatest** danger of a society that measures its freedom by its right to protest and strike and take it to the streets. That society will have just as hard a time submitting to the laws of God when they feel pinched and constrained by them.

Remember our first point on not **forgetting** God’s Word. Now Paul tells Titus to **remind the people**, when they face tension and stress and arguments with those around them, not to forget that **God wants to teach all of us submission and humility** in these earthly relationships and situations. And not only when we’re **wrong**, but also many times when we’re **right** as well. That’s why God will never allow us to **always** get our way - even in His church. We’d never learn humility or submission that way.

You can’t humbly submit to **God** until you can humbly submit to **people**. And here’s the problem. Our world doesn’t encourage submission to anyone. Our world encourages **getting what’s yours - making your own way - finding your own fulfillment on your own terms**.

And here’s the problem with all that: **You can’t be a Christian and live like that**. You just can’t. While the whole world is **in your face** with self-fulfillment, and full of people choking on their own rights, Jesus goes in the opposite direction. Jesus is carving a path, right through the middle of this fallen world, of **self-denial**. And you can’t follow Him down any other path because He’s simply not **going** down any other path.

The path of Jesus is the path of **leaving his rightful place of beauty and glory** as God the Son, coming to earth and **washing the feet of those who will desert and betray him**. It’s the path of being falsely accused and brutally beaten, **all without opening His mouth to complain**. That’s the path of Jesus. There are no other options offered.

**Philippians 2:3-8** - **“Do nothing from rivalry or conceit [How much can I do out of a spirit of selfish rivalry?], but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. [4] Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. [5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, [8] he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”**

I’ve had ushers tell me people will snap at them when they try to help them into a certain seat - **“Nobody’s going to tell me where to sit!”** And then they will raise their hands and sing **“I have decided to follow Jesus.”** **Buffalo biscuits!** They’re not within a million miles of Jesus.

I’ve had people in the resource room tell me someone will come and ask for a CD or book. The staff will tell them it’s sold out and they’ll take an order. The person then will say, **“But I need it now, not next week!”** And you want to say, **“Listen, you don’t need the Resource Room. You need the prayer room!”**

Submit to others. Look for ways to **practice** this. That’s where humility is learned and developed. You’ll find yourself drawing closer to God without even thinking about it directly.

**Titus 3:3-7** - "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. [4] But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, [5] he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, [6] whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, [7] so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

I see several thoughts here as we close:

- a) ***There is to be a clear distinction between the way I lived before coming to Jesus and the way I live after coming to Jesus***

That's so clearly spelled out in **verse 3** - "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another."

Notice how Paul calls these people to **remember** something else very important - **what they once were apart from God's grace in Christ Jesus**. Paul is calling Titus to alert these Christians to the danger of self-deception. Paul challenges them - and us - to examine whether we are truly living a **distinctly separated lifestyle**, or whether we have gradually or willfully drifted back into basically worldly patterns of behavior while mentally adhering to Christian doctrines. He highlights the **demarcation** between what the old and the new life.

- b) ***The motive for humble Christlikeness with others is fully appreciating divine grace in my own life***

**Titus 3:4-7** - "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, [5] he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, [6] whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, [7] so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Pride is what keeps us from humbly submitting to other people. Pride in **Christian** people is not only **wicked** - it's **spiritually ignorant**. If I'm too proud to submit to others it's because I'm **blind to who I am apart from the grace of Jesus Christ**.

Notice the blindness of pride and arrogance in a Christian's heart. **Verse three** is what we are inclined to **give out** to people when we don't like what they say or do. Notice the words like "**malice**," "**envy**," and "**hatred**." **Verses 4-5** describe what we have **received** from Jesus Christ. Notice the words like "**goodness**," "**loving kindness**," "**saved us**," "**mercy**," "**poured out upon us richly**," and the like.

Is there not something terribly wrong here? Is it not the height of **ingratitude** to resent graciously submitting to my brother? Is there not something terribly **blind** in the Christian who forgets these things? No wonder Paul calls Titus, and all of us today, to be "**put into remembrance**" about these facts over and over again.