

Titus 3:1-8 — How Can Christians Change A Nation?

July 11, 2021

Open your Bibles to Titus 3. While you are turning, I want to begin by telling you how thankful I am that we live in a free country. While I am grateful that we live in a free country, I think we can all acknowledge that we are living in a very divided time in our country. We are living in a polarized nation that feels like it is on the brink of civil war.

Our society was established on what I would call a semi-Christian foundation. Most of our founding fathers believed in traditional Christian values and principles of human dignity and equality found in the Scriptures. Unfortunately, many of those traditional Christian values have been wiped away. It seems that what remains is soon to be swept away.

The battle for the future of our nation was most vividly seen in the last presidential election. It was a bitter battle. News networks were blatantly one-sided. Some of them were downright dishonest and lied to the public. Big Tech was also one-sided as it censored social media,. It even removed a president's ability to tweet. The most powerful man on the planet, the man who hold the nuclear launch code was not allowed to tweet, while terrorists in the Middle East could tweet all they wanted. Many people were frustrated, and rightfully so. Some marched at the U.S. Capitol on January 6. Some of those inappropriately and disrespectfully entered the halls of Congress, which is something that left all of us stunned. As I said, we live in a turbulent time in our country. We live in a divided time in our country.

During the election, politics became the center of the world for many Americans. The outcome of a presidential election was seen as the answer to our problems. With people not able to gather for church during COVID, politics replaced church for some people. A political candidate became a new savior. For some, politics became their new religion.

For most of us, this kind of politics is the stuff that makes our skin crawl. Most Christians have had one of two reactions to the political divisiveness of our day. First, some of us have become overly involved in politics. We have put all of our energy into politics hoping it can save us and hold back the agenda of a liberal society. Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority is an example of Christians trying to solve the problems of our nation through politics. Second, the other reaction Christians have had is to completely withdraw from politics. These are Christians who huddle down in their church bunkers and from there criticize the world around them. They don't do anything about reaching the lost. They are good at criticizing.

I don't think either of these reactions is what God would have us do.

This morning, we are going to learn how our God wants Christians to relate to their government. We are going to see how we should relate to those who hold a different political view.

There are also two things I want to be clear when we finish this mornings. One is that politics cannot save our nation. The problem in our nation is much too deep. It is the problem of the human heart. Only Jesus can change the hearts of

the people in our nation. Only Jesus can change what people believe, not politics.

Second, I also want to be clear that gathering in the church and using the halls of the church to mock and demean the other side of the political aisle will only divide the church and keep those most desperately in need of Jesus from ever walking through the door of the church.

How are we to live in our politically divided times so we can reach people with Jesus? We will find those answers in Titus 3:1-8.

Background

Let me explain why I chose this passage. Titus was sent by Paul to the island of Crete. The good news of the gospel was preached on that island. People became Christians. Churches started and the gospel took root in that society. How many churches were in Crete? We don't know. The island has about a hundred small cities. There were probably not many churches on the island but there probably was at least more than one church in Crete.

While we don't know the number of churches on the island of Crete, we do know what the culture of Crete was like. It was a notorious place. It had a particularly wicked culture. It was not the kind of place you wanted to raise your children. Look what the book of Titus says about Cretans.

One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." Titus 1:12 (ESV)

Crete was a culture far from God, just like the direction our culture is heading. How were the small churches on this wicked island to reach people with Jesus and change their society?

Paul did not tell these new Christians on Crete to join a political party and try to legislate morality into their society. He also did not tell them to lock themselves in the church basement to stay away from godless society. What did he tell them to do? Let's find out.

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. 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. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 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, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. Titus 3:1–8 (ESV)

In these verses, Paul gave Titus four ways the Christians on the island of Crete were to live to make a difference in their world, to reach people with Jesus in a culture that was far from Jesus. They are:

1. In verses 1 and 2, Paul told Titus that Christians are to be model citizens and obey their government. The goodness of a Christian's character makes him or her stand out in society as different. We will spend most of our time this morning on this point.
2. In verse 3, Paul told Titus that Christians must have compassion on the lost, not hatred for the lost. They must remember what their lives were like before Jesus saved them and changed them.

3. In verses 4-7, Paul told Titus that Christians must remember what changed their lives. It wasn't politics, it was Jesus. Jesus is the solution people desperately need.
4. In verse 8, Paul returned to the topic of good works. He reminded Titus to tell Christians living in a godless society to be about the business of doing good works, to create goodwill, to open the door to people hearing the good news.

We have a lot to cover. Let's begin.

Christian are to live as model citizens.

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. Titus 3:1–2 (ESV)

In Titus 3, Paul told the Christians on Crete how they were to live in a godless society. Paul began by telling them how they were to relate to their government.

Political corruption and abuse of power is not just an American thing. It has been around since sin entered the world. Just as the people on the island of Crete were notoriously wicked, the politicians on the island of Crete were also notoriously wicked. They took bribes and perverted justice. It was like modern-day American but much worse.

How were these new Christians to relate to their corrupt government leaders? Paul told us.

We are to be subject to our leaders.

We are to do everything we can to be submissive to our rulers and those in authority over us, even if they are corrupt. It doesn't matter if the ruler in charge is Caesar, Herod, Stalin, Hitler, Donald Trump or Joe Biden. As

Christians, we are to strive to be submissive to our leaders and respect their position of authority over us. We are do what they ask us to do. I know a lot of you will disagree with me here. At this point, remember it is the Bible you disagree with, not me.

We think this truth doesn't apply to us because our rulers are so bad. We think we have a right to disobey our government leaders because they are too corrupt and heavy-handed. The truth is, our leaders are corrupt. Many of them are dishonest. In truth, they are probably not as corrupt as the government leaders on the island of Crete, the same ones Paul told Christians to obey.

Government officials at that time were notorious for bumping off political opponents. People around them died faster than people die around the Clintons. Paul said that as Christians, even when our rulers are not good people, when they are corrupt people, we are to still be submissive to them.

This is not the only time Paul talked about being submissive to government leaders, even corrupt ones, over us. Paul wrote a letter to Christians in the city of Rome and in Romans 13, he covered the same topic. He hammered home the importance of Christians being submissive to government leaders in that book.

What most of us forget is who the government leader in Rome was at that time. It was most likely Nero. He was a deranged lunatic. It was said that it was safer to be his dog than to be part of his family. He killed his wife and some of his own sons because he thought they were trying to remove him from power. He

made Hitler look as harmless as a house cat, yet look what Paul said to Roman Christians about submitting to their government.

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. Romans 13:1 (ESV)

It doesn't matter if it is a Communist government or a Democratic government. Be subject to the government. It doesn't matter if it is a well-run government or a poorly-run government, be submissive to the governing authorities.

Then Paul gave a number of reasons why we must be subject to our government, even when it is poorly run.

1. There is not authority except what God establishes.

For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Romans 13:1 (ESV)

The government that exists in our society was put there by God. God created our human government. God establishes governments. The fact that God establishes all government doesn't mean our current government is necessarily good. There are many times people in power misuse their authority even though God is the one who put them in a position of authority.

He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings... Daniel 2:21 (ESV)

We must respect our government even if we disagree with our government because God is the one put the government in place over us.

Incidentally, the Bible is very big about submitting to those in authority over us and respecting those in authority over us, even if that authority figure is not someone we chose or with whom we always agree. For example, the Bible tells children to obey their parents. God put parents in a position of authority over their

children. Children didn't choose their parents. They just need to respect the authority of their parents. In a similar way, a wife must respect her husband's position of authority in their marriage. Are husbands always perfect? Are they always worthy of that respect? Absolutely not, but wives are to give their husbands that respect. In a similar way, God put our government in a position of authority over us. We must choose to respect our government's position of authority, even when there are times they are not worthy of that respect.

2. Resisting our government is resisting God.

Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. Romans 13:2 (ESV)

If we are resisting the government or undermining the government, we are resisting the authority God has appointed over us. God will bring that into judgment. Can we disagree with those in authority over us? Yes, we can. Are we to go about resisting that authority and fighting that authority with a militia? No!

In some of our major cities, it is fashionable to resist the police. Some even think it is cool to shoot the police as a way of disrespecting authority and fighting against authority. That is completely wrong. Those who resist the police and try to take the lives of the police are not just rebelling against their government, they are rebelling against God. God will bring that into judgment.

Are all police officers perfect? Of course not! Police officers do not always use their authority fairly or correctly. We all know that. That still doesn't give people the right to resist and rebel against authority. God will bring that kind of behavior into judgment.

3. Government is given by God to restrain evil.

For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval... Romans 13:3 (ESV)

Almost all government, even when it is not functioning at its best, is still performing one of its important God-given roles in society. That is to restrain evil. If you take government away, anarchy will result. Society will fall apart. If we had no government, Arnolds Park would not be a safe place to walk at night. The park would be filled with gangs and thugs. If it were not for our government, we wouldn't have good schools. If it was not for our government, we wouldn't have a safe community. If we defund the police, the evil in human hearts does not go away. It just means there is nothing left to keep evil in check. Sin spreads. Death and destruction get worse, not better, when we defund the police.

Today, many people are frustrated with our country. I can agree with most of your concerns, yet we must still thank God for our country. Thank God for our government. Even poor government is much better than no government. Government is there to restrain evil in society.

Then Paul made a side comment that is important for us to hear. Generally, all we need to do in order to not have a problem with those in authority is be about the business of doing good, not evil. Since the government is about keeping evil in check, be about the business of doing good and most of our problems with our government will go away.

Are there times when we do good but police officers and politicians are corrupt so they hassle us unnecessarily? Yes. Thankfully that is usually not the way things work. If we are doing nothing wrong, we generally have nothing to

worry about. Even better is if we go out of our way to appreciate our public servants like police officers.

5. Government is given the authority to take life.

...for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Romans 13:4 (ESV)

Some Christians are against capital punishment. I am not opposed to capital punishment. It was carried out in the Old Testament. Here we find that government in the New Testament is given the authority to take life as it carries out punishment and its job of restraining evil. As it says in the Old Testament,

Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed... Genesis 9:6 (ESV)

Human life is so sacred that whoever takes it may end up losing his or her own life. That is what it means to bear the sword. The purpose of the sword is not to incarcerate people, it is to kill people.

Some of you will be quick to point out that some there are people that are executed unjustly. There are innocent people on death row. I agree with you. There are occasions where innocent people are executed. My response to that is we must make sure our judicial system is fair and just. It is an improper response to remove capital punishment from the government's hands as it seeks to do its God-given job of restraining evil. Paul was clear in this passage that the government has the right to take life as it keeps evil in check.

6. Christians are to pay their taxes.

For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. Romans 13:6–7 (ESV)

We are to pay our taxes. There are some people opposed to paying their taxes. They do not want their tax money supporting abortions overseas or funding what they consider an unjust war. Paul knew that all our tax money is not spent in ways we would approve, yet he said to pay our taxes anyway. It is part of being a model citizen. It is part of supporting our government and enabling it to perform its God-given task of keeping evil in check.

We are to be subject to our leaders. That means paying our taxes. It means realizing God has established our government to restrain evil. Even if we don't agree with things in our government, we are still to be thankful for our government because it would be a terrible place without government since government is a God-established authority figure for the purpose of keeping evil in check. Let's go back to Titus.

We are to be obedient to our government.

As Christians, we are to obey what the government asks us to do, even if we don't agree with everything the government asks of us. We are not to be known as a people who resist the government. We are not to be known as a people that are rebellious against the government. We are to be known for obeying our leaders, not fighting our leaders.

For many of us, this was particularly hard during COVID when the government asked us to wear masks. I am not a fan of masks. They smell and are super inconvenient. Many of you are also not a fan of masks.

As Christians, when the government asks us to do something, we are to try and obey them, not to try and fight them even if we don't personally agree

with them. There is no commandment in the Bible that says, “Though shalt not wear a mask.” That means if the government asks us to wear a mask, we try to be model citizens and wear a mask. If Wal-Mart asks us to wear a mask, we wear a mask. We don’t walk around saying, “Look at me. I am a Christian. I am free in Christ to disobey authority.” That does not go over well. It gives a reputation as a rebel. It can give Jesus a bad name.

I have been hammering the importance of us obeying authority and submitting to our government leaders. I have been forceful on that issue because we innately love to rebel against authority.

Now, let’s look at the other side of the equation. Is there a time when we should disobey authority over us? Yes, there is. There are two occasions when we disobey the government.

1. When the government asks us to do something God forbids us to do, we disobey the government.
2. When the government tells us not to do what the Bible commands us to do, we disobey government.

Let me show you what this looks like in real life. In Daniel 3, we read of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. King Nebuchadnezzar built a massive golden idol that he wanted everybody to bow to and worship. As three Jewish boys, they knew God would not be pleased with them worshipping a golden idol. In God’s top 10 list of things to avoid, No. 1 in the list was worshipping another God. Also in the top 10 list was bowing to idols. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego couldn’t comply with their government. If we read Daniel 3, we see

they expected to pay a price for obeying God instead of government. They expected they would die in the fiery furnace. Instead, they were saved from the fiery furnace by God.

Folks, if we have to obey God instead of government, we should expect to pay the price of disobedience. We should expect to suffer the consequences. God may save us, but he also may not save us. Our suffering to obey God instead of government may just be part of our worship.

Let me give you an example from the opposite side. When should we do something the government tells us not to do?

During COVID, we had the challenge of the government forbidding people from gathering to worship. If you were following COVID restrictions in Canada, our northern neighbor, you know they took the COVID lockdown far more seriously than even our most restrictive cities.

After a while, as COVID restrictions began to lift, people were allowed to go to Wal-Mart. They were allowed to go to Target, but they were not allowed to go to church. Some pastors said, "The Lord commands us to meet." They felt compelled to disobey the government and hold church. As a result, some of them were put in jail. They should not be surprised by jail. They should expect jail. It is not that they did the wrong thing. It is just part of saying, "Obedience to God is more important than obedience to our government right now. I am willing to suffer to obey God. Obeying God's Word is more important to me."

Other than these two exceptions, Christians should be known for obeying their government, not for disobeying their government, even if they don't agree with it.

We are to be eager for good works.

As Christians, we are not just to be known as model citizens in society by obedience to our government, but as Christians we are to be known for displaying aggressive goodness in society. We are to have a reputation for eagerly pursuing good works in our community. This is not reluctant goodness toward others in our community. This is eager goodness toward others in our community. This is not just to Christians. This is to people in society that are different from us, that are hostile toward us. They may be evil toward us, but we are to display aggressive goodness toward them.

No matter how hostile our culture becomes against Christ's church, no matter how pagan our nation becomes, as Christians, our role in our community is not just to be model citizens who support our government but to aggressively pursue goodness, blessing others in our community even if they are members of a different political party or have embraced a different life style. We consistently and aggressively go out of our way to extend good deeds toward them. Look what Galatians 6:10 says about this.

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:10 (ESV)

As we will see in a few minutes, aggressive goodness in our community is a big part of the way we reach a lost world with Jesus. As Christians, our aggressive goodness should make us stand out as different from the rest of the

world. While everyone else is cursing those they hate, undermining others in politics, speaking hatefully about their bosses and making fun of people at work, we are about the business of extending practical acts of goodness and kindness toward others around us, not matter how different they are from us. We will not allow them to believe we hate them because they see goodness, kindness and helpfulness being extended to them.

We are to speak evil of no one.

The idea is that when someone is around a Christian, the conversation never drifts into speaking bad about other people. It is so easy to speak badly about other people. It is so easy to talk down about people. It could be politics. It could be your boss. It could be speaking bad about your weird Uncle Frank. Christians are different. We refuse to let our conversations be seasoned with evil words against anyone.

Can you do that this week? Can you make a commitment for one week to be different? For one week refuse to speak evil of our politicians, our government leaders, or those who have hurt you. As a Christian, this will make you stand out like a bright light in a dark room. Everyone in our world is busy slandering and speaking against others around them. As Christians, we are to be different.

Does this mean we don't confront sin? No. We must confront sin. We must be courageous people and confront people about their sin to their faces and call them to repentance. I know that is uncomfortable but that is what we must do. We must not be cowardly Christians who speak evil about others to everyone else but the person who sinned against us.

We will cover this more in a few minutes but remember that most of the people in our government do not know Jesus. They are not Christians. We should not be shocked when they don't think and act like Christians. Instead of speaking evil about our leaders and cussing them under our breath, what should we do when we see a headline that tells us of another godless or foolish decision made by our government leaders? Those headlines should cause us to pray for our leaders.

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 1 Timothy 2:1–2 (ESV)

We should pray that our leaders would make good and wise decisions. Most important, we should pray that our leaders would be born again. We should pray that God would bring them to a place where they can hear the good news of the gospel and that God would open their hearts so they would repent of their sin and trust the gospel. If our political leaders were born again and brought into a right relationship with God, most of our political problems would take care of themselves.

This week, will you do that? Every time you read another headline about another foolish political decision, will you let that prompt you to pray for that leader rather than curse and slander that leader? Remember, the only way politics will change in our country is if people change in our country. The only way people will change is if they are born again.

We are to avoid quarreling.

This means we are to avoid fighting. We are not to be known for arguing over politics with people. You and I know what happens when people argue over politics. It turns into a spitting match. It doesn't matter if it is in person or on social media, we usually end up saying things we regret when we argue. We say words we cannot take back. We never change people.

As Christians, we are not to be known as a quarreling people. We are to be known as a peaceful, friendly, loving and non-combative people. We are not to be the kind of people who like to fight with others and shut down relationships. In our society, it is so easy to be contentious, hostile and angry at people.

Quarreling even has a prime time spot on television. It is a program called, "The View." It is a program dedicated to women quarreling for the entire television show. Quarreling and arguing is not just entertainment on television. It is encouraged by television. If you notice, the news media tries to motivate you to hate the other side. They are motivating you to demean and mock the other side. The media is not trying to get you excited for what a political candidate stands for. It is trying to get you to hate the candidate it opposes.

At all times, but especially when we are in church, we must not be quarreling or fighting but peaceful and loving.

We are to be gentle.

We are not to be the kind of people who like arguments. We are not to be the kind of people who raise our voices. We are not to be the kind of people who try to back others into a corner and speak abusively toward them. As Christians,

we must not be harsh with people. Paul said Christians are to be known for being gentle with other people, especially with people who disagree with them and who are not like them.

Where does gentleness come from? In Galatians 5, we find that gentleness is a fruit of the spirit. That means the closer we walk with Christ, the more time we spend with our finger in the text reading God's Word and in prayer talking to our savior, the more the character of Christ will be formed in our hearts. We will become a gentler person as the Holy Spirit makes us more and more like Jesus.

We are to show perfect courtesy to all people.

The Greek word that is translated as *courtesy* in the ESV is a little difficult to convey in English. It is a condition of the heart that demonstrates gentleness toward people not from a position of weakness, but from a position of power. It is having education, position, and authority, but not using those like a bully. It is being gentle, patient, and kind with people as you use your authority, wisdom, and power around other people.

It is not thinking of yourself as above and better than people but using your authority to lovingly and gently lead people rather than being a bully to people.

It reminded me of coaching high school wrestling. When I was a coach, I would occasionally practice with the kids on my team. As a former college wrestler, I had far more power and skill than my high school wrestlers. I could pin them at any time. That would only discourage them. I needed to learn to dial it

down and wrestle with them at their level and in a gentle and respectful way in order to be helpful to them, not hurtful toward them. That is what this word is talking about. That is how Christians are to conduct themselves.

So the first thing Paul told Titus to teach the people of Crete about how they could reach their society was that their character and conduct was incredibly important in order to break down walls between them and the lost world. They were to be supportive of their government. They were to be model citizens, even when the government was lacking. They were to be known for their obedience to those in authority over them, not fighting them like many fight the police today. Christians are to aggressively pursue good works in their communities, not just to their Christian friends but to all of the community, especially those different from them in their community. This makes the name of Jesus attractive.

Christian speech is to be different. We are to speak evil about nobody. We are always known for building people up, not tearing people down, especially people in our government. We avoid bickering and quarreling. We are to be known for showing gentleness to all people and for not using our position of power and authority to bully or abuse people.

This is the type of behavior that makes Jesus attractive in society. This is the type of behavior that opens the door to people hearing about Jesus in a world that is drifting farther away from Jesus.

Christians must remember how we thought and lived before we met Jesus.

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. Titus 3:3 (ESV)

Paul said to remember that at one time we thought just like the pagan people around us. At one time, before Jesus, we thought just like them and acted just like them. It was Jesus who changed our lives. Jesus changed our thinking. Jesus is the one who changed our hearts. He changed our values. Jesus changed our politics.

On Saturday night, occasionally Cindy and I drive through downtown Arnolds Park. We see the line of men going into the strip club. They are not all young bucks. Some of them are my age! It always turns my stomach to think walking into the club is somebody's husband who is going to be at least mentally unfaithful to his wife. The truth is, if it wasn't for Jesus changing my heart and life, I would probably be in line behind them. Men, if it wasn't for Jesus changing your heart and life, you would probably be in line right behind me! We are no better than other people. We are no different from other people. We are capable of the same sins they commit. It is only by the grace of God that we are any different.

Instead of hating people on the other side of the political aisle, instead of hating people who are diving headfirst into drunkenness and sin, have compassion for them. If it wasn't for Jesus, would be just like them!

Look what the Bible says about our lives before Jesus.

They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. Ephesians 4:18 (ESV)

Let's look briefly at how Paul described our lives before Jesus.

We were once foolish.

Paul said that before Jesus, we were living like fools. We lacked understanding. When we see people living like fools and looking like fools in this

world apart from Jesus, we must remember that apart from Jesus, that is the direction of all of us!

We were once disobedient.

The natural direction of the human heart is disobedience to authority. It is disobedience to God. Is it only after we are born again and Jesus changes the direction of our hearts that we begin to delight in obeying God's Word. Apart from God we love to rebel against obeying God's Word. It should not surprise us when we see a world that delights in disobedience. That is all human hearts until they are made right by Jesus.

We were once lead astray.

This verb is the Greek word *planao*. We get the English word planet from it. It means to wander in space, to aimlessly meander. This is the way everyone conducts themselves in this world until they are born again. They are purposeless, directionless, and pointless.

We were enslaved to various passions and pleasures.

This means that before Jesus, the only guiding forces in our lives were lusts and pleasures. Before Jesus, we lived for sexual lust, the lust of power, and the lust of money. Those were the driving forces in our lives.

We lived for pleasure. This is the Greek word *hedone*, from where we get our the English word hedonism. Before Jesus changed us, the only thing that mattered to us after satisfying our lusts was living to party, living for pleasure. There was no other reason to exist. It shouldn't surprise us when we see the rest of the world living for their lusts. It shouldn't surprise us when we see the rest of

the world living to party. Before Jesus changes people, that is the only thing in their lives.

We spent our days living in malice, envy, and hatred.

Malice is wickedness as an evil habit of the mind. It is thinking the worst about people, not the best about people. Envy is constantly being jealous of what others have that you do not have. It is what drives most marketing. Hatred is spending our time thinking the worst about other people, not the best.

This is the way the world lives before Jesus. There is no other option for them. Instead of hating on the world apart from Jesus, have compassion on them. They cannot think any differently. They cannot live any differently. If it wasn't for Jesus changing your thinking, your mind, and your heart, you would be just like them. Do not rush to mistreat your godless neighbors. Have compassion on your godless neighbors. Only Jesus can change their hearts.

Remember it is God who saved us and changed us through Jesus.

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 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, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:4–7 (ESV)

The only reason we are any different from the pro-abortion crowd, the only reason we are different from the pro-homosexual lifestyle crowd, the only reason we do not spend our days hating on people and living to satisfy our lusts is because we were saved and changed by Jesus.

It is not that we are smarter than other people. It is not that we are better than other people. As Paul said, "he saved us." God, in his amazing grace, put us

in a place where we could hear the good news of his son. With the Holy Spirit, God opened up our hearts to be able to understand the gospel, to trust in Jesus to save us and be born again. All of this comes from God, not from us. We owe God everything!

Everything about us that is different was a gift from God and his mercy through Jesus. He saved us. He made us into new people. If Jesus hadn't saved us and changed us, we would still be fools wandering around living for nothing more than satisfying our passions and pleasures while we are hating and envious of people.

Before we become completely angry at the corrupt society around us and the corrupt politicians over us, remember that if it was not for Jesus changing us, we would think and act no differently than them. This is why we must have compassion on them. This is why we must go out of our way to show aggressive love and kindness to them. We must not retreat to the bunker of the church and slander them from inside these walls.

Remember, they can't help themselves. They are living the natural extension of a life without God. Politics can't save them and change them, only Jesus can do that.

We must remember our mission.

The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. Titus 3:8 (ESV)

Paul told Titus a trustworthy saying. This is important to hear. It is important to obey. In fact, Paul said to Titus, and he said to us, that this is something we should insist on.

Those who have believed in God --- that is us --- must be careful to devote ourselves to good works. We must be aggressively doing good in our community. In the past we have said it this way.

Good works creates goodwill which opens the door to the good news.

The way we will transform the world and make a difference in society is not through politics. It is through Jesus. Do politics matter? Yes, they matter, but only Jesus can change a heart.

The only way people will listen to what we have to say about Jesus is if we are not erecting walls to keep away from the people around us but we are erecting bridges to reach the people around us. We do that by submitting to the government, by obeying those in authority, by refusing to speak evil of anyone, by being gentle and by refusing to quarrel and raise our voices.

My friends, good works creates goodwill which opens the door to telling people the good news, which is the only thing that can change a heart and the only thing that can change our nation.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, and time with his family. Feel free to contact him at www.Christ2RCulture.com (www.c2rc.com)

© You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided (1) you credit the author, (2) modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you include the web address (www.Christ2RCulture.com) on the copied resource.

