

Christian Duty in a Pagan Culture

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[Acts 4:18-20](#); [Acts 5:40-42](#); [Galatians 6:10](#); [1 Timothy 2:1-4](#); [Titus 3:1-2](#); [1 Peter 2:12](#); [1 Peter 3:15](#)

In an increasingly secular and ungodly culture, many Christians wonder about their role and duty. Should we lobby for rights that have traditionally belonged to us? Should we make every effort to implement a Christian agenda? Should we completely reform the government? The Bible speaks clearly about our duty, and it's all about governing our character.

Over a quarter of a century ago the late apologist and Christian thinker Francis Schaeffer asked the question, "How should we then live?" in his landmark book of the same title. The relevance of that question has not changed. If anything, it has only become more urgent for believers at the dawn of a new century and millennium.

Society has taken a nosedive into greater and greater evil, debauchery, violence, and corruption, and outside the church, the landscape seems filled with "modern barbarians." The temptation is strong for believers to jump into the cultural fray as self-righteous social/political reformers and condescending moralizers. All the while those self-styled Christian activists forget or ignore their true mission in the world and completely miss the answer to Schaeffer's question—an answer that God's Word spells out quite clearly.

As noble as a desire to reform society may be, and as stirring as the emotions sometimes are when involved in the "rightness" of a political cause, those activities are not to be the Christian's chief priorities. God does not call the church to influence the culture by promoting legislation and court rulings that advance a Scripture point of view. Nor does He condone any type of radical activism that would avoid tax obligations, disobey or seek removal of government officials we don't agree with, or spend an inordinate amount of time campaigning for a so-called Christian slate of candidates.

The church will really change society for the better only when individual believers make their chief concern their own spiritual maturity, which means living in a way that honors God's commands and glorifies His name. Such a concern inherently includes a firm grasp on Scripture and an understanding that its primary mandate to us is to know Christ and proclaim His gospel. A godly attitude coupled with godly living makes the saving message of the gospel credible to the unsaved. If we claim to be saved but still convey proud, unloving attitudes toward the lost, our preaching and teaching—no matter how doctrinally orthodox or politically savvy and persuasive—will be ignored or rejected.

The New Testament is very clear about how we ought to embrace and live out our primary mission in a pagan society. One such example is in Titus 3:

Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.
([Titus 3:1-2](#))

Notice that Paul simply followed the Lord's model and did not expend time and energy admonishing believers on how to reform pagan culture's idolatrous, immoral, and corrupt practices. The apostle also did not call for believers to exercise civil disobedience to protest the Roman Empire's unjust laws or cruel punishments. Instead, his appeal was for Christians to proclaim the gospel and live lives that would give clear evidence of its transforming power.

Believe it or not, Christians have obligations to a pagan society. When you live as God wants you to in an unbelieving culture, the Holy Spirit uses your life to draw the sinner by softening his attitude toward God (cf. [1 Peter 2:12](#)).

Submission and Obedience

The first two duties—submission to government and obedience to all human authority—I've combined under one heading because they are so closely related. They are just one more reminder that Christians have certain requirements of attitude and conduct in relation to their secular leaders. Those reminders reiterate the idea that believers are not exempt from following civil laws and directives, unless such orders contradict the Word and will of God (see [Acts 4:18-20](#); [5:40-42](#)). That twofold prompting also gives us the scriptural premise from which all our other public actions ought to flow.

Readiness for Good Works

Our third major duty toward society is to have a readiness "for every good deed." Here the apostle Paul is not referring to some minimal, reluctant adherence to doing what we already know is right, but to a sincere willingness and heart preparation to do good works to everyone, as we have the opportunity. No matter how antagonistic the people around us may be, we are to be kind servants to them when their lives intersect with ours. "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith" ([Galatians 6:10](#)).

God wants us to be recognized for what we might call "consistent and aggressive goodness"—good deeds done out of love for the Lord and love for other people.

Respectful in Speech

Next, we have the scriptural duty of not maligning anyone, not even those unbelievers who are most antagonistic toward biblical standards. [Titus 3:2](#) begins with Paul's command "to malign no one," and refers to cursing, slandering, and treating with contempt. In fact the Greek term rendered "malign" is the one from which we derive the English word *blasphemy*. We can never use such speech with a righteous motive.

It is sad that many believers today speak scornfully of politicians and other public figures. When they do that, they actually manifest a basic disregard of their responsibility toward authority and hinder God's redemptive plan. In another of Paul's pastoral letters, he urges us to pray for everyone's salvation, even for that of those who occupy official positions of authority ([1 Timothy 2:1-4](#)).

Peaceful and Gentle

Paul goes on in verse 2 to mention two more Christian duties. First, he reminds us that we must be friendly and peaceful toward the lost, not belligerent and quarrelsome. In the ungodly, postmodern world we live in, it's easy to condemn those who contribute to the culture's demise and write them off as corrupt sinners who will never change. If God's love for the world was so broad and intense that His Son died for a multitude of sinners ([John 3:16](#)), how can we who have received that redeeming grace be harsh and unloving toward those who have not yet received it? Until God is pleased to save an individual, he or she is going to behave like an unbeliever, and it is wrong for us, meanwhile, to treat them contemptuously for acting according to their nature.

Secondly, Paul reminds us that we must be "gentle," a word in the Greek that means being fair, moderate, and forbearing toward others. Some have translated this term "sweet reasonableness," a definition denoting an attitude that does not hold grudges but gives others the benefit of the doubt.

Consideration for Others

The final duty in the apostle Paul's list of reminders to believers is that they should be "showing every consideration for all men" ([1 Timothy 2:2](#)). The word rendered "consideration" always has a New Testament meaning of genuine concern for others.

Scripture clearly describes Jesus as the One supremely characterized by humility, or consideration for everyone—the same trait that should identify His followers. Jesus used the word to depict Himself when He told His followers, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am *gentle* and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls" ([Matthew 11:29](#), emphasis added).

All our dealings with unbelievers should display that kind of attitude, as the apostle Peter also wrote: "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" ([1 Peter 3:15](#)). Sincere, heartfelt consideration to all men is foundational for our Christian walk in a pagan society.

Our duty as we relate to an increasingly secular and ungodly culture is not to lobby for certain rights, the implementation of a Christian agenda, or the reformation of the government. Rather, God would have us continually to remember Paul's instructions to Titus and live them out as we seek to demonstrate His power and grace that can regenerate sinners. Changing people's hearts one individual at a time is the only way to bring meaningful, lasting change to our communities, our nation, and even the whole world.

PART 2

Well this morning we come again to the book of Titus, Paul's letter to this young man in the faith, ministering on the island of Crete to carry on the work there in a fashion that would bring honor to God. The book of Titus. We're looking at chapter 3 and examining the first eight verses under the theme, "The Christian's Responsibility in a Pagan Society."

I just will remind you of the general tone with which we approach these particular verses. New Testament churches were small islands in a sea of paganism. You see, they existed in an absolutely pagan culture. The Gentile world knew nothing about the Bible. It knew nothing about biblical morality. It knew nothing about Christian values. It knew nothing about a godly sense of mercy or justice. It knew nothing about a proper understanding of freedom within the framework of moral code. It was purely and totally and comprehensively and utterly pagan.

These churches were born, then, in a culture with no Christian influence. There was no cultural Christianity. There was no Christian influence on social behavior or on the belief systems. The Gentile world was literally engulfed in idolatry, all of it designed by Satan. Their cultures were totally controlled by a satanic agenda worked out through utterly and totally depraved human beings involved in worshipping demons.

So the churches, then, were in direct opposition and contrast to everything within the framework of cultural life. Given that obvious understanding, we might assume if we listen to Christians today in America that the early church should have made its primary agenda to impact culture, to try to get the various nations into which the church had been born adopt some kind of politically Christian agenda. Somehow the early church, some would seemingly want to tell us, should have put together some kind of biblical morality, some kind of biblical value system and worked very hard to get the nations to adopt that biblical moral code. However, the early church never did that. It had nothing to do with that. It did not concern itself with whatever the moral code of the nation was. It was not concerned about social behavior. It was not trying to influence culture politically or judicially or legislatively. The early church existed to do one thing and that was to reach lost people with the gospel. That was the beginning and the

end of their purpose, and that is still the church's purpose. That is still our only purpose. That is why we are in the world.

Frankly, it has been something of a nice thing to live in a country like America which has had such strong Christian influence. I mean, we are somewhat privileged to be living in the Western world, and in all of the Western world to be living in that part of the Western world - the English-speaking part of the Western world - and particularly the United States where Christianity has had such an influence in the past 150-plus years on our culture. But that isn't how it is in most cases. Certainly through the history of the church that was not the case, and it is not even the case now in all parts of the world. For several hundred years churches have existed in places like India that are utterly and totally and comprehensively pagan, and other parts of Asia. Many, many of the nations of Asia, of course, have had Christian missionaries for years and years but their culture is still completely and comprehensively pagan. There is no element of Christianity that is involved in their cultures from a legislative standpoint, from a judicial standpoint, from a religious standpoint, from an educational standpoint.

It is not necessarily important that the church somehow impact its culture to make it superficially Christian. That is not our goal. That is not our agenda. That is not our purpose. It's been a nice thing for those of us who live in America to have had Christianity influence our life as a nation. And we were a nation founded by people who wanted Christian freedom, and they wrote things in the early documents of our nation to preserve Christianity, at least as much as they could, so that our culture has been influenced by the Bible, by Christian values and Christian standards. And those things have become an important component in our society.

Now we all know that's changing, and it's changing very rapidly, and it's changing right before our eyes. We are nearly fully secular, and whatever remains to be done to make us wholly secular, we are rapidly doing it. America is abandoning its Christian influences as fast as it possibly can. And we are all being faced with some very disturbing changes. Those of us who are Christians don't like this. We have sort of assumed that a nation should be as Christian as it possibly could be, although that assumption is not certainly a biblical one. We like it that way, and now it's changing and it tends to make us sad and even angry. We watch biblical standards being replaced systematically by anarchy - by total moral freedom without any seeming moral limits - and this pervasive mentality of equal rights that makes everybody into an egotist demanding his own rights, whatever they are deemed to be.

And as Christians watch this demise, they often react with anger and fear. For example, in February of 1990, Pat Robertson held a meeting after the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C., and that meeting was designed to call for the formation, he said, of a Christian anti-defamation league. He said, and I quote him, "You've called us fools, so we'll call you bigots. Christians are tired of being stepped on and the time has come to stand up for Christians' rights," end quote.

Now, was he declaring war on a non-Christian culture? A Christian anti-defamation league? I wonder if you could get Stephen to join? Or Paul? "You call us fools, we'll call you bigots" - that sounds like retaliation; that sounds like vengeance; that sounds like we're declaring war in a non-Christian society. Is that what we are to do? Are they the enemy? Are they to be hated? Are they to be fought against? On the other hand, aren't they the people we're supposed to love and reach?

Frequently on Christian television programs you will hear various hosts, and not the least of which is Paul Crouch on our own local TBN hurling abuse at non-Christians in the media who question the integrity of Christian broadcasting. These abusive statements against the Christian media sometimes involve cursing them or consigning them to the judgment of God or even wishing that God would take their life. Is the non-Christian media our enemy? Are we supposed

to be attacking the system of government? Are we supposed to be attacking the human institutions and forcing them politically or by intimidation into some biblical morality?

In the summer of 1991 there was something called The Joshua Project. And they promoted it very widely with full-page ads in Christian publications. And The Joshua Project aimed, quote, "At taking back the culture." Now that again sounds like a declaration of war. That sounds like some kind of conflict, some kind of revolt. Somebody's got it and we've got to go get it; a sort of a crusade mentality - if you want to go back in history and look at the Crusades. The conference project that I mentioned described its purpose, I quote, "To sound the alarm, to instill the vision, to establish the leadership that will enable us to reclaim the heart of our culture," end quote.

Now that all sounds very noble. But is it? Is that our agenda? Are we to make sure that through legislation and intimidation and through the judicial process by going to court and suing and whatever else are we to do through politicizing and campaigning this particular agenda of taking back the culture? Is this what we're all about? Are we to create a superficial Christian culture?

David Rambo, responding to that - he's the president of the Christian and Missionary Alliance - says, and I quote, "God expects us to be salt in the world but let's do it in the context of God's redeeming love for all men and women. We must focus on the gospel, proclaiming it winsomely to secular people rather than alienating them on matters that are not central to our message," end quote.

John Seale, an author, writes: "A politicized faith not only blurs our priorities but weakens our loyalties." That is a very insightful statement. It both "blurs our priorities and weakens our loyalty." Our priority is to preach the gospel. Our loyalty is to Jesus Christ and His kingdom alone. He went on to say, "Our primary citizenship is not on earth but in heaven. Though few evangelicals would deny this truth in theory, the language of our spiritual citizenship frequently gets wrapped in the red, white and blue. Rather than acting as resident aliens of a heavenly kingdom, too often we sound like and act like resident apologists for a Christian America. Unless we reject the false reliance on the illusion of Christian America, evangelicalism will continue to distort the gospel and thwart a genuine biblical identity," end quote.

"If we consume our time and our money and our energy and our thoughts and our plans and our efforts in trying to make a Christian America, we will distort the gospel and thwart a genuinely biblical identity." He is exactly right. In fact, he went on to say, "American evangelicalism is now covered by layers and layers of historically shaped attitudes that obscure our original biblical core," end quote.

If you say to the average person, "What is a Christian?", how many of those layers are they going to have to search through to find the reality? We must reject our confused loyalties. We must reject our compound concerns with regard to the passing world. We must reject all efforts to externally change culture, and we must get on about doing what we're supposed to be doing. Billy Graham said, "So long as the gospel remains the gospel and the church the church; so long as the church of God is in need of reformation, the world of mission, and one last person of salvation, there will always be a future for those who seek to define themselves by the gospel itself," end quote. He is right. We cannot afford to weaken our spiritual mission. We cannot afford to obscure our priority of gospel proclamation. We cannot afford to become confused about which kingdom we belong to by getting involved in efforts to change cultural norms, cultural morals, cultural values, cultural behavior.

And certainly we can't get so engulfed in that that we become the enemies of the very people we seek to win to Christ. We can and we must reject sin as sin, but we do not engage in defamation and destruction and efforts to superficially change a culture. The task of evangelizing the lost calls for focus on that very thing. If someone says to me, "What do you do?" as people often do if I'm sitting on an airplane or somewhere else, "What do you do?" The common question that

men get asked. I could say, "Well, I'm a minister in a church," and who knows what that would mean? Who knows what they would think? It's better if I say, "I preach the gospel." That's much more central to what I do. I preach the Word of God, that's what I do. And that is, by the way, a very fast way into a conversation on the right subject.

Certainly Paul was consumed with this very, very singular mandate of evangelism when he wrote this letter to Titus. And he is very concerned that the people living in the pagan culture of Crete - which was utterly pagan, without any Christian influence at all - not get engaged in trying to moralize cultural behavior; that they not get involved in trying through the political avenues to create some kind of Christian culture. What he was concerned about was that they be able to demonstrate to their society that God saves people from sin. And, that the primary way to do that was to demonstrate a saved life. If I'm going to tell you that Dr. So-and-so cures people from cancer, you're going to say to me, "Oh, who did he cure; let me see him." And if I'm going to say to you, "Dr. So-and-so over here makes blind people see," you're going to say, "Oh, who did he give sight to?" And if I'm going to say to you, "God is a saving God who delivers men from their sin and all that goes with it of hopelessness and helplessness and emptiness," you're going to say to me, "Show me what a saved person looks like, then I'll know whether your God can do that." That is the mandate of the church. We do not attempt to change culture externally. We preach the gospel and it changes men internally. We don't even belong to this culture. We are simply aliens - our land is heaven.

Crucial then to the effort of evangelization is this entire text of chapters 2 and 3 in Titus, because here he is calling for Titus to teach the churches how to live. The issue of evangelization is not cleverness and gimmickry. It's not entertainment. It's not marketing strategy. It's not figuring out what the cultural hot buttons are and punching them all. That is not it. All of the money and time and energy and effort going to that is just so much uselessness. People are saved because a sovereign God redeems them upon the hearing of a powerful testimony of the gospel. That's how salvation works. It's not a matter of gimmickry or technique or whatever - ingenuity. Most churches think that that's the way you reach the world. Paul is saying the way you reach the world is to demonstrate what a saved person looks like. And it's so stark and it's so dramatic and it's so marvelous and it's so exciting and it's so unique and it's so different and so compelling that people come to find out whether God will save them the way He saved those whose lives they've seen. That's evangelization God's way.

And so, in this wonderful little epistle, Paul is calling on Titus to make sure the church is in the position to do that. Chapter 1, he says you've got to have the right leadership. Obviously if people are to live godly lives, you've got to have godly leaders. So he gives them all of the qualifications for godly leaders, starting there in verse 5 - ordaining the right kind of elders, taking all the way down through verse 9. These who are godly leaders then lead in proclaiming the truth, and the people follow them. In contrast to that, you have the false teachers in verses 10-16, their doctrine is wrong and their lives are "detestable and disobedient and worthless." They are "rebellious...empty talkers." Over against the false teachers who demonstrate nothing but the wrong thing and all their followers who demonstrate also the wrong thing is the true church preaching the true gospel and living transformed lives.

Now what is the character of these lives to be? Chapter 2 tells how Christians are to live in the church. Chapter 3, how they are to live in the world. Chapter 2, he says older men are to live a certain way, younger men, older women, younger women, slaves - everybody is to live in a certain way to put God's saving power on display in order to, verse 5 says, make "the word of God not be dishonored." Verse 8, to silence the opponents who want to criticize your faith and in order, verse 10 says, to "adorn the doctrine of God as a saving God in every respect." As the Christian lives a holy life in the church, as the life of the church is pure and holy and undefiled and all that God wants it to be, the watching world sees transformed lives. And since the end of

chapter 2 says God is a saving God and brings “salvation to all men,” He wants to put His saving power on display, and that's why He has redeemed us, verse 14, and purified us and made us “zealous for good works” so that people can see what a saved life is like.

Then he comes into chapter 3, and he says here it's also important not only how you live in the church, but how you live in the world. And you remember verses 1 and 2, we studied them last week. He says you remind them, “be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.”

In the society and in the culture you are to live this way so that they also will see your transformed life, not only in regard to how you treat other Christians, but how you live within the society itself. And we looked at that opening verse or two last time under the heading, “Remember Your Duty,” “Remember Your Duty.” If we are to know how to live in a pagan culture, we have to remember our duty. And there were seven duties given there, seven of them. Be subject to rulers, to authorities. We bow the knee. We don't fight the system. We don't attack it. We don't revolt. We aren't revolutionaries. We aren't protesters. We are subject. Then to be obedient. Whatever the law says, we comply and we obey. We are eager to do every positive good. We're not just knuckling under. We're not just bending our back and bowing our knee. We are glad, eager, anxious to pursue every good deed we can within our society.

Verse 2, we “never malign anybody.” We don't speak evil of people. We don't blast them. We don't curse them. We don't malign their name, their character. We are not contentious - we don't fight; we don't pick fights; we don't retaliate; we are not pugilists. And we are “gentle.” What is that? – “meek.” And we show every possible kindness to everyone in our society, including our president, and our leaders, and all those in authority, and the people we are employed by and who are over us and are teachers, and all the way down.

So if we are to know how to behave in a pagan society, first of all Paul says, we must remember our duty and it's very clear. We went over that in detail. And the reason is, *Why?* Because God desires to save. And our lives are the platform on which salvation is proclaimed believably. It's the same thing we saw in 1 Timothy 2. You are to be under the king and all those in authority over you, and you are to pray for them, and you are to live a quiet and peaceable life and a godly life and a wise and careful and thoughtful life and to be a good citizen. *Why?* Because God “desires all men to be saved.” And what makes the gospel believable is not fighting Christians, not protesting Christians, not politicizing Christians, not Christians who want to start an anti-Christian defamation league, not Christians who want to damn and curse and consign to hell the media. What makes Christianity attractive is winsomeness, is people who are covered, as it were, in the righteousness of Christ and who manifest His love. Remember your duties.

Secondly, and this is where we'll pick it up: remember your former condition. To have a proper response in a pagan culture you must remember your former condition. Look at verse 3, “For we also once ourselves were...” and then he gives a list of seven vices. Seven virtues in verses 1 and 2, seven vices here in verse 3. “We also once ourselves were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.”

Listen, before you get slanderous, before you get angry at those in authority in your country and those around you who are in sin and those who have an immoral agenda, before you get hostile and slanderous and angry, and before you court those kinds of emotions that lead to venomous kinds of acts and thoughts of vengeance, before you become inconsiderate, before you fight for the cultural Christian agenda, before you attack the ungodly and attack the unsaved, Paul says remember once you were one of them. Did you forget? Did you forget? Did you forget that you used to be like that and you couldn't do anything about it? And there you have in verse 3 another

one of those lists that Paul loves to give. You find them in Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, Galatians 5, Ephesians 4 - one of those lists that defines the universal and comprehensive depth of human fallenness. All of us were like that. Paul himself was “a blasphemer,” he says in 1 Timothy 1, “and a persecutor and a violent aggressor,” but he did it “ignorantly in unbelief.” As if to say, “I mean I did it because I didn't know any better.”

You look at the gay agenda, and you watch the homosexual pride parade, and you listen to all the lesbian advocacy, and you see all of the *Playboy* mentality and the filth and the pornography of our time, and you watch this agenda being pushed on the social institutions and taught to your children - everything from sex education to passing out birth control devices and all of the stuff going on, and something in you becomes hostile to all of that, and you've got to stop and realize that the people doing that are doing it in utter ignorance.

Look at verse 3, you “were once foolish.” What does that mean? They lacked understanding. They are completely ignorant, *anoētos*, “without knowledge, without understanding.” They don't know what they're doing. [Ephesians 4:18](#) says basically the same thing, that the Gentiles are “darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their hearts.” They're dark; they're ignorant. The god of this world has blinded their minds, which compounds the darkness. And naturally “they cannot understand the things of God,” says Paul in his letter to the Corinthians.

So what do you expect? As soon as you knock the pinions out from under cultural Christianity and there aren't any restraints, their ignorance is going to take over. As soon as there's no compelling biblical criteria, they're left to their own devices, and this is what you should expect. This is unbelievers acting like unbelievers. This is depravity manifesting itself. I suppose you thought that somehow the more intelligent people became, the more likely they were to approximate a biblical morality - wrong, absolutely wrong. If you want a good insight into that, pick up a book written by Paul Johnson called *The Intellectuals*. He is probably the foremost historian in our world today of Western civilization, and you will go through the most unbelievable morass of filth in reading about the intellectual, philosophical architects of contemporary Western culture. And you will find out that those men, who were smart enough to design the whole culture in which you live, were the most debauched human beings on the face of the earth. And their lives would make a black mark on a piece of coal. Intelligence and education has nothing to contribute to morality.

Now I think - we're shocked, I think, when we look at institutions of higher education because we assume there is some, something so reasonable about biblical morality, so intelligent about biblical morality that smart people who study carefully would come to wise conclusions. But they cannot override their depravity. They're ignorant, no matter how educated, no matter how many PhDs they have. They're blind and ignorant and darkened. What do we expect from them? Nothing more than what their own depravity could engineer.

Then he says they are “disobedient.” To God? Of course, and consequently to all authority instituted by God. There is in the heart of man rebellion. It is bound up in his heart. It's bound up in his fallenness. That's why you spank your children, to knock the rebelliousness under some control. But where God isn't there, and the Spirit isn't there to restrain it, lawless resistance to truth and virtue will run amuck - and that is just depravity doing what depravity does. And we haven't seen it fully in America in the past because we did have some residue of Christian constraint in the system. That is all gone, and now we're going to see depravity like it was seen in pagan Greek culture. We will be more the kind of church the church used to be in its early beginnings. They are “disobedient.” They are disobedient to God and to authority. They care not for the Bible. They laugh and mock at the Scripture, overtly or covertly. They are resistant to truth and virtue.

Then he says, thirdly: they are “deceived.” That's that verb again that gives us the word *planet*. They just wander around in space. They are not moored. They are not anchored. They just wander. It literally means they “are led astray.” They are perverted in mind and will and action. Their major thing is freedom. They just want to roam at all their impulses. Nothing holds them down; nothing quantifies their life; nothing qualifies their life; they just live at whim - whatever they feel. They are deceivers, and they are deceived, and they get worse and worse, [2 Timothy 3:13](#) says.

Now what's driving them? If they're ignorant and disobedient and deceived, they can't know the truth. They don't want to do the truth. They're led into all kinds of error. What is the driving force? Here it is: they're “enslaved to various lusts and pleasures,” “various lusts.” A multitude of different epithymiais, “evil desires.” It might be for money. It might be for sex. It might be for lesbian sex. It might be for homosexuality among men. It might be for power. It might be for food. It might be for alcohol. It might be for drugs. It might be for murder. It might be for rape. It might be for who knows what all. They are driven by the only impulse they have within them, and that is their lust. And he adds “pleasures,” from which we get the word *hedonism*, *hēdonē*, “pleasures.” They live for what makes them feel good. And, as a result, “they will spend,” he says - this is all of us; we also were spending our life. Now he's not saying we did it now and then, or we once did it, or we might do it, or there's a chance we could do it. He's saying we did it “all our life in malice and envy.” “Malice” means just plain “wickedness,” *kakia*, “deep wickedness.” But it has the idea of a malicious wickedness that wants to hurt and harm and take what it wants at the price - at any price, really, for another to pay.

So what do you have? First of all, you have an ignorant person, an ignorant person and a disobedient person. And because they can't know the truth, don't know the truth, don't respond to the truth, they then wander all over the place, and the only thing that leads them is their passion. And it leads to lust and pleasure. And once they get a taste of lust and pleasure, they spend their whole life on consuming this kind of thing to the extent that they have evil intent toward everybody; that they seek everything they can get and don't care who has to pay the price for it. “Malice and envy” – “envy” means “ill will.” There's a malicious evil and an ill will bound up in the fallenness of man. They never get satisfaction because lust is never satisfied, pleasure is never lasting, and so they continue to consume and to consume. And whatever anybody else has that gets in the way, they become angry and hostile and malicious and envious. And it feeds – “envy” is the sin that feeds on the living, and it wants to consume them.

And that leads ultimately to the end of verse 3, “hateful and hating one another.” They then become literally consumed with hating anybody who stands in their way. They're self-centered to the degree where they hate anyone that is at all an obstacle to them or a problem to them or anybody who disagrees with them or stands in their way or takes issue with them. And then, ultimately, they come to the place where they hate everybody but themselves because that's where depravity ultimately goes. It goes to ego, and ego says, “I want what I want when I want it, and you get out of my way because I'm getting it.” That's why they can't maintain marriages. That's why parents can't get along with each other. That's why children hate parents, parents hate children. The ultimate agenda of fallen man is pride, and pride isolates him from everybody. That's the picture.

Now what do you expect people like that to come up with? What kind of, what kind of system do you expect them to come up with? Well, just sit back and watch because you're going to see it. You're seeing it right now, and it's exactly what we would presume - blind to God and therefore blind to all spiritual reality; rebellious to God's law and resistant completely to His truth; utterly deceived about what is true and what is right; in complete bondage to mindless passion and living only for pleasure, they feed on the living by perverse treatment of others so that they are detested by the rest of the egotists. And everybody winds up hating everybody.

Now what kind of world do you think they're going to develop? They're going to develop the kind of world you see. Just remember, would you, that you were there once, too. And if you were saved when you were a small child, as we shall see in a moment, except for the grace of God you'd be a part of the same blindness. So before you eagerly rush to mistreat the pagans who offend you and who are destroying all vestiges of Christian influence, consider your own depravity. They are depraved. And so were you before you were saved, and you were no different than them. And that's what we expect. And so you've got to look at them as Jesus looked at them, and see them *sadly* on their way to hell and unable to do anything other than what they're doing. Yes, there is a rebellion in them. Yes, there is an animosity toward God. There is a vitriolic attitude toward what is true. And yes, it is reprehensible, and yes, God will condemn them and punish them in eternal hell if they don't turn from their sin and believe in Him. But at the same time, God so loved the world. And we've got to be able to cope with the sin and see the iniquity for what it is and confront it for what it is without becoming malicious rebels who hate the very culture God has called us to reach. If Jesus could sit and look over at the city of Jerusalem and weep for their apostasy, can we look over our nation and weep? Remember your duty, he says, and remember your former condition.

There's a third point here. If we're going to have a proper perspective in a pagan culture, we must remember our salvation. So, he says to Titus, you tell them to remember your salvation. And here comes seven aspects of salvation. There were seven virtues in verses 1 and 2, seven vices in verse 3, and now there are seven aspects of salvation in verses 4-7. Verses 4-7 is one sentence, one long sentence that sweeps over the reality of salvation to remind us that the only reason we're different is because of God, not us, right? Nothing is worse than smug self-righteousness. Nothing is worse than Christians sitting around damning all of the unconverted people because of the fact that we're better than they are. Listen, my friend, the only reason you're not one of them on the way to hell is because of God's grace. You've got to remember that.

Look at verse 4, "When the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration, renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." The only reason you're an heir, and the only reason you have a hope of eternal life, and the only reason you're justified and made right with God, and the only reason that you have come through Jesus Christ to receive the Holy Spirit, and the only reason you've been renewed and regenerated and washed, the only reason you've been saved is because God is merciful. That's what he's saying.

Now, you know, this particular passage of Scripture is a heaven of sorts to a theologian. There is so much here you could spend the rest of your life in those verses. It sweeps across the great, glorious truths of salvation. Now I'm not going to take the time to do that. Next time we're going to go back into this thing and look a little more closely at those features. But for now I want you to feel the impact of the whole of what he is saying. Follow me through those verses again.

Salvation was initiated by God, verse 4, "When the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared." The initiative is with God. He came into the world showing His kindness and His love in the incarnation in Christ. He saved us. Again, His initiation - not on the basis of something which we had done which was righteous and therefore earned it, but according to His mercy. He washed us; He regenerated us; He renewed us through the Holy Spirit; He poured out His Spirit on us through Christ; He justified us by His grace; He made us heirs; and He gave us the hope of eternal life. It's all from Him.

So would you look at the unbeliever like that, and would you say to yourself, "He's not like me" - listen carefully - "because God has not done for him what He's done for me"? You need to view him like that. When you are repulsed by the media and their anti-Christian agenda, when you

are repulsed by the homosexuals and the lesbians and the fornicators and adulterers and all of that, and the educators, and whoever else - the politicians - will you look at them and simply say, "They're the way they are because God has not saved them"? I'm the way I am because He saved me. Get the perspective.

"When the kindness," verse 4 says, "of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared" - What a great statement! Salvation is rooted in the love of God. Ephesians 2 talks about "the great love wherewith He has loved us." That is why He gave us Christ. It is in God's kindness and God's love that our salvation resides. It is God our Savior, verse 10 of chapter 2; it is Christ our Savior, verse 6 of chapter 3. As we've seen those same descriptive terms of God and Christ throughout the pastoral epistles, it all originates with them. His love appeared. His kindness appeared, and He saved us. It is God who is the rescuer. God came down and rescued us. Verse 5, "He saved us." That little three letters - three words rather - "He saved us" takes us to the cross and the resurrection. And He did it "not on the basis of deeds which we have done." We didn't deserve our salvation. We didn't deserve our transformation. Our deliverance from sin and death and hell was purely on God's love and God's kindness alone. Nothing in us was worthy. We made no contribution to His plan. We made no contribution to His choice. We made no contribution to His work of salvation. He looked at us in pity and compassion and love and mercy and saved us. We deserve wrath; we got forgiveness. We are undeserved; we received what we do not earn. In fact, His mercy was uninfluenced and His grace was absolutely spontaneous. And yet He washed us, and the agent of washing is the Word. He regenerated us - that's speaking about the new birth; He renewed us.

All of that really looks at the same event. We were washed; that's one way to look at salvation, it's the cleansing of sin. We were regenerated; that's another way to look at salvation. It's new birth, new life, *paliggenesia*, that marvelous word. And then we were renewed; that's another way to look at the same event. We came out of that experience in newness of life, now living life on a completely different plane. All of that speaks of radical transformation initiated by God, not according to anything we've done. We were radically transformed, and then we were infused with the Holy Spirit, who was poured out on us richly. We were then made right with God through all of that, verse 7 says, and became joint-heirs with Christ in "the hope of eternal life."

All of that is simply to say one thing. Look, the only reason you're different than the corrupt society around you is because God saved *you*. How can you hate those people who have never known the mercy of God? Can't you feel the same pity, the same compassion that God felt toward you?

And then in verse 8, the first little statement, "This is a trustworthy statement." Stop there. That really belongs with verses 4-7. That little phrase, "this is a trustworthy statement," is a descriptive phrase used five times in the pastoral epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus. And it is used to identify a commonly-known expression that was axiomatic. When you say something is an axiom, you mean it is a self-evident truth that doesn't need proof; it's just obvious. Apparently in the early church there were a number of such self-evident axioms that had found their way into the repetitive vocabulary of Christians, and they would frequently recite them. This appears to have been one of those from verses 4-7. Some think it was a part of a creed, a commonly-recited creed in the early church, and others think it may well have been a part of a hymn. But it was one of those trustworthy statements. Sometimes you read that same phrase in Paul's letters to Timothy: "this is a trustworthy statement and worthy of all acceptance." It's the same basic phrase. It was something that was self-evident, something that everybody knew, and he's simply saying this: "You all know this for sure. You all know that salvation is by grace and grace alone. So before you become angry and hostile against the culture in which you live, remember that apart from the grace of God that's you, that's you."

So, how are we to live in a pagan society? One: we remember our duty. Two: we remember our former condition, and that helps us to understand they're only acting the way they act because that's the only way they can act. And thirdly: we remember our salvation, that it's only the grace of God that sets us apart from them. And as we have been pitied, so we should pity them. They are in a pitiful condition.

Finally, fourthly: if you want to live the way God wants you to live in a pagan culture, remember your mission. Remember your duty, your former condition, your salvation, and remember your mission. Now into verse 8, "And concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men."

Now he reminds Titus to remind the church of their mission. He says to him, "concerning these things." What things? All the things he's been writing, certainly since chapter 2, verse 1, "As for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine" - everything regarding sound doctrine. And then he goes and gives him a lot of things in chapter 2, and then in chapter 3. Now comes back to where he started in chapter 2, verse 1, and saying, "concerning these things I want you to speak confidently." "Don't be hesitant; preach these things with boldness and conviction." The Greek verb is very intensive. It has added in the front of it *dia*, the intense preposition, and it intensifies the verb. "You are to speak confidently and intensely about these matters of Christian behavior."

That's what the church is about. When church comes together it comes together to be exhorted. As we saw in chapter 2, verse 15, "speak, exhort, reprove, and don't let anybody disregard you; you do that with authority." You "remind them," verse 1 of chapter 3. Now he says you "speak these things confidently." When the church comes together, the church is to be addressed. You need to be here every week so that you can be stimulated to love and good works. The matter of evangelism is at stake, and how you live your life is at stake, and you need to be stimulated week in and week out to godliness. So he says, "Titus, you speak these things confidently, these matters of behavior in a pagan culture," and these matters of behavior in the church that we talked about in chapter 2. "You speak them unhesitatingly so that those who have believed God..." That is a great phrase. Not who have believed in God, but who have believed God. What is that? Those who take God at His Word - that's a definition of Christians. Who are Christians? They're not just people who believe in God. A lot of people believe in God. They're people who take God's Word seriously. They believe God when He speaks. Eighty percent of the people in America believe in God. But I'll promise you right now, a very small percentage *believe* God when He speaks. And that's the issue here. He's talking about the believers who believe the Word of God. You can speak it confidently because those who take God at His Word are going to respond and be careful to engage in good deeds. They're going to take the lead in doing what is excellent. They're going to give very careful, thoughtful, devoted attention to the matter of spiritual living. People who take God seriously are going to do that.

Part of the problem in the church today is we've got people who say they believe in God, who say they're Christians, who are in the church, and they don't take God's Word seriously, do they? But they're passed off as Christians, and that's part of the confusion in the society. "You speak confidently, and you speak to the Christians, those who take God's Word seriously, and they'll be careful to engage in good deeds, and these things then are good and profitable for men." What does that mean? They lead to the salvation of lost souls because they demonstrate transformed lives. They bring light and life and peace and joy and salvation.

We have a great challenge in our beloved country. And I think the church is missing the whole approach. We have an increasingly paganized nation, and some Christians are jumping on the political bandwagon trying to impact "the culture," quote/unquote. That's not our goal. That's not our purpose. That's not our calling. Other Christians are trying to come up with more clever

strategy for evangelism and feel if they can find all the marketing tools and all of the hot buttons and push them properly, people are going to get saved because the technique is so clever. And so they turn the church into an entertainment center for unbelievers who want to come and be entertained. And hopefully, if they're entertained enough to get real happy and real enthusiastic, they'll decide that they want to become Christians.

That's not how it's done, folks. You might get a crowd, and you might even preach the gospel and have some people saved, but you're going to have immature, carnal, ignorant believers whose lives are not going to demonstrate to the culture the transforming, saving power of God. When the church comes together, it comes together to be spoken to with boldness and called to holy living, and out of the Word of God because those who take the Word of God seriously are going "to engage in the good deeds" that are going to become "good and profitable" for the watching world. That's the mandate. We can't just be sad. We can't certainly be hostile. We've got to pray for those in our culture and our society who are lost. We've got to pity them and love them with the love of God and show them Christ's saving power in our lives. The church does not need now to become more like the world. It needs to become utterly and distinctively the church so that there is such an obvious difference that the world can see it clearly. We're doing exactly the opposite, and that's the tragedy. For us here we have a mandate - we can't fix everything, but we can be what God wants us to be here. And God will in His grace use us to bring many to righteousness.

Father, we thank You again this morning for Your Word. We are a people who can say, "We believe You." If You speak, we listen. We take Your Word seriously and we want, Lord, to live the kind of lives that You want us to live so that we can demonstrate what a transformed person is like. And then they'll know You have transforming power. Help us to live holy lives, lives of compassion and love, lives of grace and kindness and mercy that they might see in us the first-born of heaven, even Jesus Christ and His love and compassion and pity and His virtue. And seeing what we are, might conclude, "Their God is a saving God," and come themselves for salvation. To this end we pray, for Christ's sake. Amen.