

Titus 3:1–3

The Character, Limits, and Motivations of Godly Submission to Civil Magistrates

Thursday, October 26, 2023 • Read Titus 3:1–3

*Questions from the Scripture text: What does “remind” imply that Paul has already done (v1)? To whom are they to be subject? What else are they to do? What sort of work should this obedience be? What does “readiness” show about not just preparation but attitude? Of whom should they speak evil (v2)? Who, from v1, are they likely to be most tempted to do this? How should they be in their interactions? How should they be in their demeanor? How much humility should they aim at? Before which men should this humility be evident? Who else were once foolish and disobedient (v3)? How did we get to be that way? What did we then serve? How did we then relate to others?*

**How are we to interact with wicked rulers and neighbors?** Titus 3:1–2 looks forward to the second serial reading of in morning public worship on the coming Lord’s Day. In these three verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **Christians should adorn the gospel by being godly citizens and neighbors.**

**There’s authority in the civil sphere, too.** The apostle has just told Titus to speak, exhort, and rebuke with all authority, letting none despise him (cf. 2:15). Of course, authorities that conduct themselves in the way that Titus was to act (cf. 2:7–8) are easier to submit to (although submitting to authority is never easy for our flesh). But not all authorities are godly. In fact, many of them are in the condition that “we ourselves” (v3) were once in. So, how must we respond to wicked rulers and authorities.

**Submit and obey.** These are the main things that we are to do with rulers and authorities, according to v1. The difficulty that partially sanctified saints have with this is evident from the need to “remind” us. But that is what authority is for, first and foremost. We must always remember that the chain of command never ends at earth, but goes all the way up to God (cf. Rom 13:1–7; ; 1Pet 2:13–16; Jn 19:11). The first thing to do if we are in authority is to submit to God as the Authority above us from Whom our authority comes. And the first thing to do if we are under authority is to submit to the lesser authorities that God has providentially set over us.

**Doing good works.** v1 ends by telling us to be ready for every good work. This implies that there are times when we do not obey. “Submit” and “obey” are qualified by the type of work that we are to be ready to do at the authority’s behest. God alone is the One Who defines what a good work is. So, Christians should make authorities marvel at how ready we are to obey them in so many things that we do—we are then the most eager and compliant and zealous citizens. Then, it will also be a marvel when we are given a command that we must disobey because obedience would be sinful. That is NOT a work that we are ready to do.

**Displaying humility to all men,** v2. Sometimes, the most difficult thing to give an authority (especially a wicked one), is honor. Yet, we are commanded to do it (cf. Rom 13:7; 1Pet 2:17). What if that authority is wicked? Both the Romans and 1Peter passages were written within the contexts of unbelieving, and even particularly wicked, kings. And even Michael spoke gravely rather than revilingly with the devil himself (cf. Jude 1:8–9). When we find this difficult, let us remember that “speak evil of no one” has its root in that humility that we show to all. If we are first humbled under the mighty hand of God, we will speak not from the fire of our flesh but from the grace that God gives to the humble (cf. Ja 3:5–9, 4:6; 1Pet 5:5–7).

It is from this humility before God that this refusal to speak evil proceeds, and from this humility also proceeds our being peaceable (v2, humble in our interactions with others) and gentle (v2, humble in how we carry ourselves). Thus, not only should our authorities find us to be their best subjects, but “all men” (v2) should also find us to be their best neighbors.

What authorities do you have the hardest time not speaking evil of? With whom do you need the most help being peaceable? What interaction must you have with God, in order to produce this interaction with others? What opportunities has God given, and are you taking, to cultivate humility before Him?

*Sample prayer: Lord, all rule and authority belong to You, but our flesh resists submitting and obeying. Forgive us for forgetting that You are at the top of the chain of command. Give us such readiness for every good work that it is remarkable when we are unable to obey because the command was evil. And forgive us for lacking humility before You. Our pride is displayed whenever we are unpeaceable or ungentle. Forgive us for the sin against You in our hearts that displays itself in our sin against others. Grant us grace to cleanse us and conform us to Christ, through Whom we ask it, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs:** ARP24 “The Earth and the Riches” or TPH533 “Have Thine Own Way, Lord”

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Titus three versus one through three. These are God's words. Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities to obey. To be ready for every good work. To speak evil of no one. To be peaceable. Gentle. Showing all humility to all men. For we ourselves. We're also once foolish.

Disobedient deceived. Serving various lusts and pleasures. Living. In malice and envy. Hateful and hating. One another. So far the reading of god's inspired and Inherent word. The apostle has just told Titus that he has to maintain his authority. Which is an authority of the preaching of the word and authority of the shepherding of god's people.

At the end of Titus, chapter 2, And yet, there are those who are in authority, not in the sphere of the church, the authority of the preaching of the word and of the shepherding.

There are those who are in authority in the civil sphere, not the authority of the preaching of the word and the shepherding Of God's people but rulers who are servants of god. As romans chapter 13. Also teaches us and as the lord jesus himself, And taught when pilots said, don't you know that i have authority and Jesus told him, he would not have that authority unless it had been given to him.

From above. So there's story authority in the civil sphere too, which means that one of the things that titus is to teach with his spiritual authority. Is that they are to obey the civil authority, remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities. So there's a submissiveness there's an accepting Of the authority.

That is over you and knowing them your place. To obey. And that's knowing of our place does mean, that when we receive a command from a civil authority that is not unlawful. And it can be Unlawful in. A couple of different ways, it can be unlawful in commanding sin.

That when we receive, A command from a civil authority, that is not unlawful. And it can be unlawful in a couple of different ways. First, it may be a command that is a command itself to sin. The second is, it may be a command that belongs to a sphere that is not under their prerogative, the civil authority.

Cannot give us. Commands, for instance, for How to worship? Although certainly If you have a faithful church in the nation, That has commands for how to worship, or what theology to teach and someone has found guilty of violating god's law. Uh, as as enforced by the commands, Of or upheld by the commands of the spiritual authority or the church, then it is the duty of the civil magistrate still.

Uh, to punish the evil and reward the good. Uh but you know, one way that has the command of a civil magistrate may be Unlawful. Is, is by giving commands in a sphere? That does not belong to them. And yet when the command of the civil magistrate is not unlawful, does neither a command to sin?

Nor is it a command? That oversteps. In the place in the church or in the home, which are also institutions of God. Then we must obey. Because we are not then obeying only the immediate magistrate who is above us or a couple steps above us in the chain of command.

But the chain of command goes all the way up to the lord's. Jesus christ. Indeed, god himself who has given To the god, man. His son the mediator. This mediatorial authority, this kingship over heaven and earth even with respect to his office as the christ. And so we are.

Not just to be subject but also to obey and we then when whenever the command is not unlawful are the most zealous and diligent obeyers everyone else is just obeying because they feel like they have to or at best because they feel like in the social project that they're participating in or perhaps in the benevolence of their civil magistrate, perhaps they have a good king and they like to obey their good king out of love for him.

Still there. Obedience ought to be nothing compared To the christians obedience in the nation. Who knows that the chain of command, never stops on earth that goes all the way up to heaven. And so our obedience is out of love for christ and in the diligence of those who are honoring and obeying him, so Up until the point.

The civil magistrate gives an unlawful command, he should be perplexed at how the christians are the best citizens that he has. How they obey with zeal and joy and love and conscientiousness. And then of course, he will be equally perplexed when he gives an unlawful command and they suddenly become the most staunch steady resistant disobeyers in the nation.

And even in that way. And this has happened, many times in church history, although the church is not always been healthy. But often when it is persecuted and clinging to christ and hoping in and clinging to his rule, his overrule of all earthly rule. Often in those times, the church has done this the best.

And you have different. Apologists those who speak and write to the world explaining. Why christians are how they are because the world doesn't have a clue. Why we are, how we are and that's especially a way to Uh, to tell of who God is, who christ is what God has done in christ and so forth.

And perhaps the most famous of these apologies for us. The institutes of the christian religion, by john calvin is actually addressed to the magistrate, giving an explanation for why reformed believers are the way they are. And it ends up being such. A comprehensive and helpful applicational. Tree tests on christian theology, it's still one of the best systematic theologies For us to use in god's good providence to us.

And so we we are subject and we obey because last part A verse 1. We are ready for every good work. And so we want to do good works in our home. There's a father as a husband, as a mother as a wife. That's a child as a brother or sister.

We want to do good, works in the church. As a worshiper and church member and bearing one another's burdens and speaking the truth to one another in love and And participating in the body. And no one saying i am not a part of the body or he, or she is not a part of the body.

We want to do whatever good works. God gives us opportunity to in the community. Having mercy on orphans and widows, especially in the church but also in the world. But then when it comes to having mercy on those in the world, also being careful to keep ourselves unspotted.

But also when it comes to doing good, works to those who are in the world, keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. So that we pursue this pure and undefiled religion in the side of god and we add this conduct in the state. To the good works that we do.

And so there's a readiness, there's an eagerness. There is a willingness And, Therefore is not just obedience that is a good work but there is this humility. There is this gentleness verse 2. Speak evil of no one be peaceable and gentle showing all humidity military to all men. And so in each of those spheres, i just described isn't there.

There is a humility and a gentleness and a piece ability that serves God and good works. I hope this is one of the things that you are working on in your own heart and your own life. The way that you're interacting with your brothers and sisters being first of all, humbled, before the lord.

Humble yourself under the mighty hand of god, he gives he opposes the proud. He gives grace to the humble, you can cast your cares upon him. And so if you have this contented humility in which you know that god is doing you good and you know that every day is an opportunity to serve in humility and submission and gentleness.

First of all the lord who has given you himself in christ that enables you then to show humility to before others and to treat them with a gentleness and a piece. That hopefully in a christian family, they don't have to wonder. Why is she being so gentle? Why is?

Is, does he keep speaking those soft words that turn away wrath? And show a kindness and response to mind. Meanness that immediately humiliates me and convicts me and has me coming back, you know, 17 seconds later and saying i'm sorry i should not have talked to you that way.

Well, in a christian home, we know the reason Why the first one who showed the humility and the gentleness and the peace ability is like that. It's because of grace and he's helping his brother or sister a parent her child in the home. To remember that about christ and respond that way to christ.

And we have that opportunity of course in the congregation as well. But we do have this opportunity even in the state. That being those who are gentle and peaceable and refuse to speak evil. Which will really mark us as distinct in the agent, which we live. Because we live in an age of rampant reviling, and cursing, and attacking.

And not. Not thinking of or speaking charitably of others. And if we are obeying Titus 3 verse 2, it will be something that marks us off as different. And we know that we're really not to not to revile anyone. Remember the, the book of jude tells us that the archangel Michael And jude one versus, you know, there's only one chapter in June, dude.

Versus eight nine, the archangel Michael would not even revile, the devil But he spoke in a grave and serious. Way, a way that had regard. For the waitiness of. Of the interaction. Not just because it's the devil. But because he's before the face of god, And so in his rightly responding to the devil, he said the lord rebuke you.

Is what jude says and that's the same idea right behind joseph when his when his brothers come before, you know, the, the text where What are the part where he says? Um, You meant it for evil, but god meant it for good. You remember the first question he asks, He says, am i in the place of god?

And so if we are always before the face of god, we're going to measure our words. If you have someone who's just a very weighty man with you, This is something

that you have to learn, as you go along. We once in a while, a very indignant younger, child will.

Will be wanting to vigorously, make their case. And and they will slide in the way that they are talking. And one of the older siblings will say. Mom and dad are right here. Let them deal with it. Well, there are things that are our responsibility to deal with on earth, but we must always remember.

God is right here. We are. Before his face, everything that is done is done in responsibility before him in regard for him. And there are things that we leave to him. And this is one of the things, especially that measures how we respond to evil. We don't take vengeance because god says, vengeance.

Belongs to me. And the scripture even says make room leave room for the vengeance of the lord. And that's why we don't repay evil for evil, but overcome evil with good. That's why. Even if they revile us, we do not revile them. But we would say with the holy angel, the lord rebuke you we would take it.

Away that is why when In philippians when he says let your gentleness be known to all. He gives us one of the great reasons for that the lord is at hand. The lord is Nearby. And so, there's this. There's this goal. There's this intention of displaying humility to all man and one of the reasons why we display that humility is because we know that there is nothing that we see coming out of them.

That we don't know is in us. It used to come out of us. And still does to some extent and you have that list. Then for we ourselves were also once and all of these things that we are going to That we are going to deal with when we come to verse three through seven the next time.

Uh, that we are in Titus. But that is one of the other things that helps us we remember that the lord is at hand. We humble ourselves under The mighty hand of god leave room for his vengeance. We say the lord rebuke you. But we also remember that we are not so very different.

I mean, the archangel Michael was very different than lucifer. Although they had started out the same but lucifer, L, Michael didn't. But we are not so very different and whatever difference there is in us has come from redeeming grace. Which he is going to move on to in verses 3, 3 7.

And these are the things That will help us. Both, when we are obeying with zeal and cheerfulness and diligence, that is inexplicable. And when we are disobeying With resoluteness and determination. That is also inexplicable. But in both cases, we will do so With gentleness and humility. That comes. Not from being doormats.

But from knowing the greatness of god before him, we all are And from knowing the greatness of grace, Which is the only thing that has made a difference. In us. So that helps us. Out in the world with the civil magistrate, but i hope it is very helpful to us.

Also, in the day-to-day, in our home and then how we interact in the church, Before the face of god. The lord. The spirit, apply these things to us, let's ask him to do that. Our gracious god are heavenly. Father, we thank you for giving Christ to be our righteousness.

You did submit himself and open not his mouth and his not only in atonement. For us, but an example to us and we pray that by your spirit and his spirit, we would be conformed to his image and trust ourselves to you who judge justly. And that we would show our humility before all that.

We would revile. No one. Give us. So god then to be peaceable and gentle in the home and in the church. And as citizens of the state make us, we pray. The best subjects of this nation that it has. Whether the nation is willing to acknowledge that and full or not, But grant it, we pray through christ.

And for his glory, we ask in his name. Amen.