

Witnesses in the World

Beautifying the Bride, p.3

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Bible Text: Titus 3:1-2
Preached on: Sunday, April 28, 2024

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Titus chapter 3. If you're new to us today, we're preaching through the New Testament epistle of Titus where Paul is writing to Titus whom he has commissioned to straighten out the churches on the island of Crete. Crete was a wild and woolly place, a difficult place. There seemed to be a contemptuous, brazen, haughty, questioning, ranting and reviling spirit among the citizens of Crete and far too much of this sloshed over into the churches. So Paul gives Philemon, Philemon, different book, different friend, gives Titus the instruction, the command, the assignment, "Go to Crete," and literally he says, "straighten these things out." Now we come to chapter 3 and we have a whole different area. It's a very practical and straightforward exhortation here about a new area that needs to be straightened out in the churches on the island of Crete. Let's look at it together. Titus 3 verses 1 and 2.

1 Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, 2 to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.

"Remind them," he says. In other words, these things that are common in the Cretian culture should not be common among the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. We should be the opposite of a godless culture. So we have some guiding precepts here just like back up in chapter 2 we had guiding foundational principles for Christians in the home and in the church, he gave guiding practical application for older men in the church and then older women in the church, and then the older women to mentor the younger women in the church, and then he gave practical admonitions to the younger men in the church and then to slaves or servants. And he covered all of that and says, "Here's how a Christian should function in these roles." And now we come to chapter 3, and we have foundational principles for Christians in their societal setting, both the political realm, or what I'll call their civic duties, and in the social realm, or how to live in true Christian beauty, if you will, in the social realm.

But by way of introduction, it should be a main point of the sermon, but I'm just gonna make it by way of introduction, I wanna talk about the ministry of reminding because it is a very foundational ministry, if you will, or principle for parents, uh small group leaders, and certainly for pastors. He begins here by saying, verse 1, chapter 3, "Remind them."

It's a present imperative verb. It means to cause to remember. "Get this in their brain again, Titus." It's a continual task, that's what the present tense of the original Greek means. Continually be reminding them. There are foundational things about Christianity, about our homes, that are based on Christ, our churches that are based on Christ, that must be reminded or must be given out as reminders. There must be a repetition there.

You see, repetition and reminder is par for the course for good parenting, and it's certainly par for the course of good pastoring or preaching. For example, 2 Peter chapter 1 verses 13 through 15, Peter writes, "I consider it right, so long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent," I'm gonna die soon, "as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind." So he says, "I'm going to keep reminding, using some repetition about foundational things so that when I'm long dead, you'll never forget them." And by the way, we need reminding of the foundational things, like of all foundational things, the gospel, and it never gets old, and repetition of foundational truths is essential for the totality of our life is concerning things that matter. Uh John MacArthur often says that he's preached so long in one place, he struggles with saying truths differently so that he's not repeating himself and I understand that, and I wrestle with some of that myself, having been here 43, 44 years, but um in balance with that, there's some things I want to say over and over, and there's some things I want to say the same way so that when I'm long gone, you can't forget it. And I thought about some of the things that um I try to repeat often, kind of like the uh the kid that would say, "You know, my dad always said..." or, "You know, my mom always said..." Well, there's a reason she always said it. She wanted to use repetition so you'd never forget it and some things they always said we wish we could forget perhaps.

One of the things I try to say often is that the glory of God is everything and God is most glorified in his local church. You ever heard that before? I try to say that often so that you never forget it. Close akin to that, I try to say often that God is all about having for himself a people. Now you individually are precious to him, but he he wants a people, a group represented now in this time by his local churches. I try to repeat often about the holiness of God that in every way that God made us like himself, he's yet infinitely superior to us and also he is radically in contrast and different from us. He transcends us. You ever heard that before? Were you listening earlier? My wife said, "Well, one of them, you say a lot is it's not your works that save you, it's not your prayer that saves you, it's not your walking to the front that saves you, it's not even your faith that saves you, though that's the instrument, it is Christ that saves you." I don't want to come to your deathbed one day and you say, "Well, pastor, I did that." You did what? I want to hear you say, "Pastor, my hope's in Christ till my last breath," not any Baptist system or Baptist sacrament or Catholic sacrament or our ordinance of a church, but Christ, Christ is our ordinance. He is our sacrament. Another one that Pam mentioned to me, she said, "Well, you've always told us that when Jesus died, satisfaction and substitution." Remember, I used to tell you if somebody stopped you dead cold on two o'clock in the afternoon at the courthouse in Colbert County and said, "What happened on the cross?" You could say, "Satisfaction and substitution. He satisfied the wrath of God that was it

for me, against me, and He was substituting in my place before God, under the wrath of God."

And then I try to repeat our strategy statements, our what I call now our structures of grace, uh home life discipleship, every member minister through small groups, personalized strategic world missions. You know, I I looked at some of my records and I haven't been repeating that much in the last 10, 15 years because I've assumed you've got it by now. But there's probably a mistake there, because if I had you raise your hand, there's a lot of people who have been just come to the church in the last 10, 15 years, and they haven't heard it as much. Well, our Purpose Statement is something we try to repeat a lot. Purpose of Grace Life Church of the Shoals is to glorify God by obediently making and equipping disciples of Christ in the Shoals and throughout the world by the power of the Holy Spirit. I just haven't found a reason in 40 years to change it. Looking at the Scriptures, it's it's imperfect, but it's about as good as I think I can do. And and I talked to Brother Nathan this week about, um, uh we're we're gonna start handing out a Baptist catechism whereby you can use in your home. That's not law and it's not legalism, but it's helpful to repeat with your children some of the basic tenets of the faith. And so it's just helpful. If you don't do it, it doesn't mean you can't raise good kids. All right, just helpful. But it's a way to be reminding our children at home.

So this thing of reminding is a foundational element of Christianity. So Paul here is telling Titus to repeatedly put these things in the mind of the Cretian believers and I think one reason for that is they need reminders because the Cretians were prone to leak. They'd get the truth in them, they'd leak it back out like you do every week. You know, the silly story was that the guy that came down to the front steps during the revival meeting and he'd cry out during during the revival, "O Lord, fill me! O Lord, fill me! O Lord, fill me!" And one senior adult lady got tired of him doing that every revival meeting and said, "Lord, don't do it. He leaks." Well, the truth is we all leak so there is that need for this ministry of of repetition.

I um, I had to get my tires aligned recently in a car and I found out this morning driving to church, I have another car, another vehicle that needs the tires aligned, and then when your tires are not aligned, your wheels are not aligned, you tend to veer off track. And that's the way we are. Every Sunday, we need reminders of certain things because we are so prone to veer off track and that's what happens when you come to church every Sunday, you're getting a spiritual realignment. It's the divine task of the pastor to preach the word and help us all get back into proper alignment, typically in our thinking, but so that it could guide our walking. Then we leave and after getting a new alignment, we're better off or we're better to stay on track and not off into error and into sin or some sort of false doctrinal understanding.

Now, what specifically now is Paul saying here uh that he is to repeatedly bring to these Cretian believers' minds and thinking. Well, I., we're going to put it in two parts. It's two simple parts here. There's their civic responsibility and then their social responsibility. So we'll first talk about I., we're to be witnesses in this world, that's what I've entitled this exposition, by or let's say through our civic duties. Through our civic duties. Again, in

verse 1, "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed." Actually, when he says to uh uh to be to be, um, verse 1, subject to rulers, to authorities, it could mean to rulers who have authority. God's given them authority, and he certainly has. Let me just read these couple of cross references to show you how heavenly the New Testament emphasizes a Christian's responsibility to fulfill their civic duty of honoring those who are in government authority.

In 1 Peter 2, beginning in verse 12, "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles." And notice here, the purpose behind you being honorable of civic authorities is so that you'll be a good witness to those who don't know God. Those who don't know God should look at Christians and say, "As far as they can, they're respectful and honorable to governing authorities. They don't want to be revolutionaries. They don't want to unravel the fabric of culture and society. They're they're good folks." So keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, 2 Peter 2:12, "so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men." In other words, you're always being attacked and maligned by worldly people, but as they see you have an honorable, respectful, demeanor towards civic authority, they'll be put to silence. Verse 16, "Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king."

And again, Romans 13, verses 1 through 7. "Every person," that's in the church, that Christian, "is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God." We look to our governing authorities as those of us who are established by God. "Therefore whoever resists authority," that was commonplace in the old Grecian culture, we don't want to do that, "whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves." Verse 3, "For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior," now this is generally speaking, there are exceptions but generally speaking that's so. "Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same." Verse 4, "for it is a minister of God to you for good." We view our governing authorities from the mayor, the chief of police, to the president of the United States as ministers set there by God for good. "But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." So Paul says, "Titus, it's just very necessary because of the rancor and and and and in subjection or or lack of subjection and ranting and reviling against authority that is so common among Cretians that you make sure the church is different, they have a different tone and a different spirit about them."

He says in verse 1, continuing to be obedient. Really what I'd like to do now is take the word obedient and give you the other side of the coin of what uh is a balance. If you're obedient, you are not lawless so don't have a lawlessness about you. Don't have a lawless spirit about you as a child of God questioning the right of governing authorities to even give you laws that you must abide by and then violating those laws if you don't like them. That's a lawlessness and that is radically inconsistent with a child of God. Lawlessness is a contempt for the law. It means without law. It's when every man does what is right in his own eyes. This this modern phrase has become somewhat popular. It seems like it's it's mostly uh espoused by young women today who would say, "Well, this is my truth." I saw a person interviewing a young lady. Where'd all these young ladies get so crazy anyway? And they're interviewing this young lady and she said the most ludicrous, obviously totally insane thing. It couldn't be true. And he said, "Well, that's not true." She said, "It's my truth." So it's just, "I'm God," you know? And so we got millions of gods out there making up their own truth. But brothers, this is what that is, that's lawlessness. That's all that is. It's the spirit of lawlessness. We're not to have that spirit. Rejecting any objective standard outside of ourselves, that is having no absolutes, rejecting biblical law and biblical morality, that's lawlessness. Rejecting the right of the governing authorities to make laws for the good of the citizenry, if you reject that, that is a lawless spirit, that's lawlessness, a willful violation of law, unless that law violates the clear teaching of God's word, is lawlessness. For example, I could never abide by the law in China when for for 35 years they had a one child policy in China and forced abortions upon people. We couldn't abide by that but you can have a respectful tone in spirit about the government because God places governments over us, though on that particular point, we could not go along with that, of course, as Christians.

So there's a balance in these things and by the way, there are thoughtful men who are saying that China's in trouble. They are not going to have enough young people to support the old people. Isn't it interesting how we play God and try to fix things we dig a deeper hole? And the United States is right behind them. You know, we're averaging about 1.6 child per home right now in America, which means we're not replacing ourselves. You can't sustain yourself as a society when you have far less children than you have older folks. Children are a gift from God. They're not in the way. They're not a problem. They're not secondary. They're they're foundational to a a successful culture and society in the purposes of God, one of the key purposes for marriage.

Now, in balance of reverencing governing authorities and honoring them, you and I live in this place called America where the government is of the people, for the people, and by the people, unless you have mail-in ballots. Did y'all hear me? Then it may not be of, and for, and by, because we don't know who all these ballots came from. If I could just tread on out there a little bit further. I don't think you can have a true and fair election with mail-in ballots. We'll not go into that any further. But we have a government that's supposed to be of, for, and by the people, a representative Republic, if you will. So that, in effect, makes every citizen lawmakers. So it is right in that form of government for us to speak up, to speak against, to work toward changing laws, to establish good and proper laws the best we can. So so don't think you don't have a voice or a place to protest or a place to disagree. You do, especially in a representative Republic like you and I live in.

That's the way it's designed to work. But the principle of reviling against authority is what Paul is getting at here. We must honor the office, though we disagree strongly with the policies of those in the office.

So, believers are to be honorable law-abiders, embracing the right of governing authorities to make and establish and enforce laws, i.e. we are not to be lawless. Let me let me bear this out a little bit more. Believers are to have no partnership with lawlessness. 2 Corinthians 6:14, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness...?" There's no way we can be a lawless and have a lawless spirit, if you will, and be in fellowship with God and be right in our Christian walk. "What fellowship has light with darkness?"

Jesus will one day reject all those known as lawless ones. Matthew 7:23, "And I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" In other words, you are an anarchist. You embraced this thing of reviling governing authorities and those who have been given by God the right to make laws.

Lawlessness is the primary characteristic of the antichrist. 2 Thessalonians 2:3, "Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness," the antichrist, "is revealed, the son of destruction."

The Bible teaches that God will restrain lawlessness to preserve the world until it's time for it to be unrestrained. That's all gonna happen in God's timing. 2 Thessalonians 2:6 and 7, "And you know what restrains him," that's the man of lawlessness, "now, so that in his time he will be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way." It's the Holy Spirit that is now holding back this full onslaught of of ungodly lawlessness in our land but the spirit is already here. The the the the showers, if you will, of lawlessness are already all around us. But one day, the Holy Spirit of God will be removed, his restraining power will be removed, and then full-bore the mystery, which literally means what was hidden is now unveiled, the real lawlessness one, the antichrist, will be seen and we'll see what real true lawlessness looks like in its full effect, if you will. So 2 Thessalonians 2:7 says, the mystery of lawlessness is already at work in our land, but in in our context here, Paul is saying but it should not be at work in Christians. It should not be the attitude that you have. It should not be the disposition that you have. But one day, the full-bore revelation of lawlessness will come forth when the antichrist is revealed.

Now in radical contrast, the Lord Jesus Christ is the full-bore manifestation of the mystery of godliness. We didn't know what godliness really was, we didn't know how a godly person really acted and functioned, we did not know how man could be godly until Jesus was born and then it was manifest. He comes as the unveiling of godliness. The antichrist comes as the unveiling of lawlessness. We are not of the lawless one, we are of the godly one, of Jesus, the Bible says, 1 Timothy 3:16, "By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness." We didn't know what we knew in types and shadowy figures, but we didn't really see who was the one and only true godly one until Jesus came. That's what it means in 1 Timothy 3:16 when it says, "He who was revealed," manifested, "in

the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit," fully controlled by the Holy Spirit, if you will, "Seen by angels," he was the one who was dwelled in the holiness with the angels, but also "Proclaimed among the nations," the Gentiles. What an incredible thing. This one who was worthy to dwell in the holy realm of the angels also came and made himself known among the darkened Gentile world. "Believed on in the world, Taken up into glory."

So in the flow of this, making sure we are godly ones who honor authorities, submit to our governing authorities, hold to their right to make laws for people that we might live honorably and decently and sanely, if you will, among one another, then he adds the phrase to be obedient in verse 1. To be obedient. We're to model humble obedience to governing authorities. Um just briefly from the Old Testament, we have the example of Daniel who worked for wicked Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel honored the king's request in every way he possibly could unless the king asked him to personally violate the law of the Jews. And so that he's a great example and and then eventually, the king required all the nation to worship the God of Daniel, vindicated him powerfully. And then Joseph, Joseph works for Pharaoh and he honored Pharaoh and pretty soon Joseph became the most powerful man in the whole world, the most powerful man in all the Egyptian empire. And then like Nehemiah with Artaxerxes, who because of his loyal dedication to the king and to serve the king's purposes, he was trusted by the king to go back and rebuild Jerusalem. And we could go on and on, Esther and others. So you do walk that tight rope of, "King, I cannot sin against my God, but in every other way I can, I support you because God's ordained authority." There's a balance in that.

So he says in verse 1, be obedient and then be ready for every good deed. I think that's just a an amplification of being obedient, like Daniel was obedient to Nebuchadnezzar, like Joseph was obedient to Pharaoh, like Nehemiah was obedient to Artaxerxes. And by the way, these were vile and wicked and ungodly men, but they knew God ordained authority. What's your demeanor? What's your spirit toward those in governing authority? I don't want to ever hear that there's a young person in this church that disrespects a police officer or the mayor, the city council, chief of police. It ought to be, "Yes, sir and no, sir." Honoring governing authorities. We have for a long, long time here at Grace Life made it well known to the mayor and to the chief of police and to the school superintendent, any way we can serve you, we will serve you. Just let us know. And we've maintained that. I believe if you ask any of those, they would tell you if we need something, we know Grace Life Church would do it because that's the demeanor and the spirit we want to have.

So first of all, Paul writes to Titus and says, "Titus, very straightforward, down to brass tacks here. You know how the Cretian culture is. You know the the scathing, maligning, ranting, and reviling this authority that's common among the Cretians. It cannot be common in Jesus Christ's church. Remind them repeatedly, Titus. to honor ruling authorities, to be obedient, to subject themselves to them, being ready for every good deed." Now, the second part of this, not only are you gonna be good witnesses in the world when you do that, when you through your your civic duties, but the next one, I word it this way, through your social beauty. Through your social beauty. In other words,

what he's gonna tell them to do next in this kind of narcissistic, self-consumed, reviling culture they're in, it's going to be beautiful to, look at verse 2 with me, it's going to be beautiful "to malign no one," that's really different than the Cretians would do, "to be peaceable and gentle and show every consideration to all men." To malign no one, let's obviously look at that one first, means to speak evil against no one. It it does encompass the idea of ranting and reviling against others. I I don't know, maybe it's because social media gives us an audience to every idiot on the planet but I've never seen it, the ranting, reviling spirit, just just spewing off stuff, just venting ridiculous accusations and and fault findings and criticism and and slanders. And that's what he's saying, Christians should not be known for that. Now there's a place to speak the truth clearly. Not quite like Donald Trump does it, though I will say, in the annals of history, God's used some rough old cobs to straighten out some big old messes. He just has. Cyrus the Persian. Pharaoh of Babylon, or of Egypt. Artaxerxes. So I hope in God's providence, he's got a, well, he he might be gonna mark a straight line with a crooked stick. Hope so.

I don't know all the purposes of God, but we live in a culture that's full of this maligning other people just to speak evil against them, to destroy them and tear them down and it's quite easy when you're a Christian in this culture, the Cretian culture, the American culture, when you're attacked all the time, and how falsehoods set against you and everything you say is spun to put you in the worst light, it's really hard sometimes to catch yourself and not malign in return. And that's what he says, don't do that. Don't be like that. And so in balance, we must point out evil to others and hopefully reach them and protect other people from error, but a willful motive to unnecessarily injure another person is not our purpose and pattern as the children of God. See how practical this is?

So malign no one and the next word there is peaceable, to be peaceable. Well, the Cretian culture of this day was known to be anything but peaceable. Literally the word means to abstain from fighting and I think this is more about our tone and our spirit than anything else. I think that's the key. Brothers and sisters, there's no place for being caustic and cutting and demeaning in spirit. Now I say that and I had to think about the words of Jesus where he looks at the Pharisees and says, "You brood of vipers. You're like whitewashed tombs. You're the blind leading the blind." Jesus was caustic and cutting and forceful. There's a place for that. And you say, "Well, you're just saying that because you're a preacher," because preachers can do some of that if they're gonna be true to the text. But I will say this, I don't do that in personal confrontations hardly ever, never. But there's a difference in preaching and proclaiming truth than personal interactions.

So wrestle with it. Wrestle with it. Strive to be peaceable. A peaceable spirit. We have to strive to have a peaceable spirit when we are dealing with those whose lifestyle and whose words contradict everything we believe in. I have a business that I frequent regularly, and there's an individual that usually waits on me that is trying hard to be everything but what God made that person to be. Sometimes I wanna say, "Hey, it ain't working, buddy, just go back and be what you are." But I am very careful to be extra kind, commending, thankful, giving a good tip because I think that's the right tone to have in our interaction personally in this world. And that's where Titus is basically getting this instruction from Paul, help them in their personal lives to not have that kind

of demeanor of caustic maligning and causing friction and trouble when it's not necessary.

Then he has the word gentle. Verse 2 again, malign no one, be peaceable and be gentle, a gentle spirit. Uh he goes on and says, "showing every consideration for all men." These really overlap, one connects to the other. Show your peaceable spirit, show a gentle spirit, make sure your behavior exhibits this. And then connecting to that, he says, show consideration, how's he word it there? Showing every consideration to all men. That's a negative and a positive side of this word consideration. The Greek scholars tell us the word consideration is very difficult to translate into English. It's better described than just giving it a one word translation. Negatively, it's the opposite of haughtiness. It's the opposite of self-assertiveness. Positively, it's meekness. You keep your passions under control. You don't spout off and are harsh back to others. Be like Jesus, Matthew 11:29. Jesus, "I am meek and lowly of heart." Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:1 says, "Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent." This is what my Sunday school teacher used to say back when I was first converted up in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, this is walking the talk. Walk the talk. Be peaceable, be gentle. Show every consideration for all men.

It's a powerful witness that Christ has changed us when we, maybe not with perfection, but as a pattern of our social intercourse, we give every consideration to what others are going through and where they're coming from and how they can't understand the truth if they haven't been saved yet. Not just denounce them or condemn them or run over them or run roughshod or rant and revile or whatever it might be. You say, "Well, the world doesn't function this way toward us. The world doesn't treat us this way." Exactly. That's because they can't. They can't treat us this way. They don't have the capacity to do it. But we have something they do not have. We have a born again heart. We have the Spirit of God in our hearts and the fruit of the Spirit, and if we'll get out of the way, it'll flow out of us. Galatians 5:22, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." These are the fruits of the Spirit. These should be flowing out of us which brings that peaceable and gentle and showing consideration for all men's spirit flowing out of us. They can't treat us like this. They have not the capacity, but we do. I don't want you to do your best. I want you to let God through you. That's what this is.

Philippians 4:5, Paul says, "Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near." That's outside the church. Same idea as he's talking to Titus about teaching the churches on the island of Crete. And at the end of it all, I don't have to have this world's or the people of this world to treat me peaceably. I don't have to have the people of this world to treat me gently. Who told you you're supposed to have that? Don't think the world that crucified our Savior is gonna like you. Why do you expect that? Don't pay back the people of this world. You're not like them. You're not of them. You're programmed differently since the new birth. I don't have to have the world to treat me peaceably for me to be peaceable back. I don't have the world treat me gently for me to be gentle back. I don't have to have them to give me consideration of where I've been and where I come from for me to give them consideration. You know why? Because my

Savior has established peace between me and God and my Savior has given me his peace, and my Savior treats me with gentleness as a loving shepherd, and my Savior went to a cruel cross in full consideration of my need. So I can treat you that way, whether you treat me that way or not. That's where Paul's getting to. And this precious Savior lives in me, enabling me to treat all men with peace and gentleness in every consideration.

Brothers and sisters, this this kind of behavior is not the exception for for high class or more powerful Christians. This is everyday normal Christian living. You see, we live supernaturally naturally. This is supernatural and it's natural for us if we're walking in the Spirit. Luke 6:27 reminds us, "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies and do good to those who hate you." Then Luke 6:33, "If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that for you? For even sinners do the same." In other words, if you treat people, if you respond to people, if you pay people back, if you get back at people the way the world does, you're just like the world. Christians don't do that. Well, we fail at times, don't we? That gives you a chance to humble yourself and say, "You know, I'm a Christian, but sometimes I'm not a good one and the way I responded back was wrong. Will you please forgive me?" And brothers and sisters, when we humble ourselves in a social setting to do that, that's more powerful than have never sinned at all sometimes. After all, should we not have pity and mercy on these lost ones around us like Jesus did? Should we not show the love to them as we've been loved with this great and wonderful and holy God who sent his Son to be our Savior, who treated us peaceably, who's treated us gently, who's shown us every consideration? Jesus on the cross, Luke 23:34, that Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they're doing." And they cast lots dividing up his garments among them.

So when we're like Paul is telling Titus to repeatedly instruct the church churches on the island of Crete to keep on being peaceable and keep on being gentle and keep on showing consideration, when we do that, no matter what happens to us, we are being like Jesus. Quit attacking back. Quit it. Your Lord will vindicate you and when you do good to those who don't do good to you you put burning coals of conviction upon their head. "Why should we do that, pastor?" Because we can. We have something they don't have and this marks us as his. After all, they are in a satanic stronghold. That's the world, the unsaved. They're enslaved to sin and lust. They're blinded and they cannot cure themselves. They're literally the blind leading the blind. So this is our consideration of them: we have pity on them. All they've got is all they've got. No wonder they fight back. No wonder they revile back. That's all they've got. But we've got all this in heaven too. They don't have all that. So we can do a beautiful thing, a beautiful, is there anything more beautiful than Jesus dying on the cross with those reviling, cruel men, crucifying him and him saying, "Now Father, would you forgive them?" It's beautiful. And when you're peaceable when men aren't peaceable to you, when you're gentle when men aren't gentle to you, when you show every consideration but they don't show you consideration, it's a beautiful thing and it glorifies God and we are witnesses in this world through our civic duty and through our social beauty.

Well, starting with your pastor, anyone need to repent this morning? Maybe maybe we need to start with, "Lord, help me just be a normal Christian." This is just normal

Christian stuff. I'm not saying it's necessarily sin to want to punch them right in the face sometimes, but you catch yourself and say, "Lord, that's just like me. That's just like, that's why I need a Savior because that's just like me, and I'm gonna crush that motive and that desire right now and choose to be peaceable in return." You you may not believe this, but there was a time when a lot of people in Muscle Shoals, Alabama did not like Jeff Noblit. Now what you snickering about? And Pam and I would go in a restaurant, Pam and I would go into Walmart, and we'd see six or eight people that hated us every time we went and they pretty much let us know they hated us. And it was hard. I grew up with a lot of rejection, so rejection just struck me deep and I had to literally talk to myself in the parking lot before I went in Walmart and say, "You know what? I can always love. Love doesn't care what happens to you. I can always love them. No matter. It just doesn't matter, I can just always love them." But you know what the good thing about it is that doesn't happen anymore and a whole lot of the people that didn't like me, like me now and I sure love them. So if you've got a tough spot, you won't be perfect, strive to do what's right by the word of God and watch God change the circumstance over time and turn it around. What's it say? A gentle answer turns away wrath. I told you this was practical and straightforward, didn't I? Boy, it sure is. Isn't the word of God good? Where where else are you going to find this stuff? I can't write this stuff. It's good stuff.