

Have you ever looked at the cover of a so called “beauty magazine”... seen the images that others find very attractive... and wondered “Why?” “How do others see beauty in this image of someone who obviously feels quite miserable...?” They project an attitude that never looks like they have any enjoyment in life. They sneer. They snarl. Their look of detachment (in my opinion) declares: “Don’t you wish that you were as woeful as me?...” Is **THAT** beauty...? How is THAT enticing...?

What I am asking is: What is beauty...? How can two people look at the same thing – and one be in awe... and the other in revulsion...? Is it our pre-conceived thoughts and ideas that we project onto whatever we are beholding? ... Or... are there any universal standards...? (Smooth skin...? High cheek bones...? Slightly upturned nose...? Puffy lips...?) Who decides what is beautiful and what is not...? ... Is what the average person today considers to be beautiful – the same as it has always been...? ... Ah.... No!

Has science been able to provide us with any answers...? Is beauty whatever stimulates a chemical reaction inside of us to increase our heart and overtake our thought patterns...? ... Trying to understand beauty in such mechanical terms... destroys the very concept of it... doesn’t it...?

Scripture (on the other-hand) offers us a better understanding. (As we are about to see)... it even provides us with some unchanging... and universal standards... of what beauty is. ... God’s word has a lot to say about beauty. And today... our passage of Scripture is going to answer **THIS** simple question (**which we all want to know**): “How can I make myself more beautiful?” .. [ P A U S E ] ..

God wants you and I to be absolutely stunning. He wants us to be striking... exquisite... gorgeous. (Don't start looking around the room... but do you think we may be disappointing Him...?) ... O.K. Well never-the-less... I think that I am talking to the right group. ... Our passage is all about how to make ourselves more attractive to a non-believing world.

We get a strong sense from our passage that God wants many more people to come to Him... and what holds a lot of folks back... is that **YOU AND I** are too ugly. (Or to say it more nicely) we are not as *stunning* as we *should* be. ... So... How can we make ourselves more beautiful?

Even though I have titled today's message: "Beauty Tips for Believers"... these are MORE than tips. (They are mandates.) "Beauty Tips" is what our culture is obsessed with... so "Beauty Tips" just sounded better than "Beauty Commands." But as we get closer and close to our Lord's return... we need to recognize these *MORE* as commands... dictates... decrees for us. God wants us to draw more people to Himself... and our attractiveness is what He wants to use... while there is still time. So let's begin...

### **Titus 3:1-2**

Our first "**Beauty Requirement**" is that we must be distinctive from the world. We will not attract others to Jesus Christ – if we look no different than everyone else.

Back in the 60's and 70's we used to have a celebrity psychologist... who paved the way for Dr. Phil. Her name was Dr. Joyce Brothers. She would say: "opposites attract." (There must be some truth to that. God asks us to be different from the world... so we can attract others to Him.)

One way that we are to look different... is by our willful submission to government authorities. Titus was ministering on the Island of Crete. The Cretans detested the Roman government. ... One of the church fathers wrote, "*Cretans are notoriously turbulent, quarrelsome, opposing all authority, involved in insurrection and murder . . .*"

So when Paul wrote in verse one for Titus to remind them to be submissive to their **government authorities**... he was asking them to be distinctive... from what Cretans were known for. Verse 1 (here) is definitely about giving complete respect to government officials. (There is no getting around it.) Paul writes that Instead of being turbulent... quarrelsome... opposing all authority... they were to...

### **Titus 3:2**

Man! That would really set them apart as being different. And you know what? It would really set you and I apart as being different too... wouldn't it?

*"Well now wait a minute... Pastor! Don't go soft on my patriotism! The man that we have as our President... doesn't deserve to be there. He is immoral and stands for everything that I am against! ... It is my duty to do everything the constitution and laws of the state will allow... to get him outta there!... I LOVE this country and he is destroying it!"*

I admit: obeying what Scripture is clearly teaching here is very difficult! Some American presidents quickly earn my respect... but others... inspire me to reject this beauty command. "*I'll just remain UGLY (here)*"... So I act just like all the others that I gather around me. ... I will look at all of the evil

and destruction *that the politician that I hate is doing...* and I will feel *justified* (in my mind) to remain UGLY.

Eventually (however)... I come to the realization that... Paul was writing about the Roman Emperor **NERO**. *At the time Paul wrote this to Titus...* a person FAR MORE selfish... vicious... ungodly... and cruel... than anyone who has ever occupied our nation's White House – was the ruler (*the authority*)... of which Paul wrote.

A few years *after the Holy Spirit had Paul write this...* Nero **UN**mercifully persecuted Christians – trying to stamp Christianity completely-out around the Roman Empire. (Do you think the Holy Spirit didn't know Nero would do this?) “*Ooops! Never mind. It's OK to disrespect **that** guy! He is evil enough...*” ... (No. I'm sure not.)

So would we ever be justified to disobey Titus 3:1? ... The believer should not have a bad attitude toward the government... and show it by slanderous accusations and contentious actions. The word *gentle* (Titus 3:2) means “*an attitude of moderation, a sweet reasonableness.*”

Our general demeanor toward politician that we don't like should be humble courtesy. ... (But here is something else that verse 2 makes clear.)

Christians must offer this dignity to “all people” — regardless of race... regardless of skin color... regardless of religion or lack of such... regardless of political leanings... regardless of economic status... or salary... or occupation... or education... or marital status. Verse 2 plainly says that we are to show perfect courtesy to all people.

We sure would be distinct! (We would look much different than the world.) This is a Biblical Beauty Standard - that we might be attractive. We see it

in the beginning of verse two and at the end. At the beginning we read: “*Speak evil of no one.*” (It is not just government officials.)

“*Speak evil of no one*” means we are to malign no one... (We are not to defame... badmouth... denigrate anyone – politician or otherwise... no matter how much we think they deserve it... We are to exercise “sweet reasonableness” out of a life of wisdom that refuses to hold a grudge... and that also gives others the benefit of the doubt. ... (LISTEN!) we simply are not to be involved with gossip.)

Many evil reports are passed from person to person without even a shred of evidence that the report is true. (And this is also done OUTSIDE the church!) - What an indictment against us! We look no different.

Most of us serve in some capacity of leadership in the church... or (perhaps) will one day. ... In such positions we discover that the higher we rise... the better a target we become for all sorts of attacks. People will say things about us from jealousy... out of depression... out of selfish manipulative agendas... or out of malice. ... Some just like fighting. Others will try to incite differences among those in the Christian community... out of the sense of importance it gives them to be able to create problems... be in the know... or watch fur fly.

Some of the attacks will be for valid causes. Others will not. As a consequence... you will be tempted to establish your own position by damaging the reputations of those who have attacked you... or to sacrifice community peace for the sake of personal pride... or the proof of being right.

The world well understands infighting and backbiting... but... what wins the gospel a hearing from unbelievers... (what makes us attractive)... is a very different pattern in the church. We need humility. Paul goes on from here to give us some very practical instruction for actually doing this. (And) yes... we need a miracle from God to become attractive in this way. But before we go there... there is something very important for me to address.

Many believers will reject this beauty tip... because they misunderstand it to mean - what has been called “*doormat Christianity*” - (which is passively letting people – in general - and the government trample all over you.) No. What Titus 3:1-2 calls for us to do... is to **exercise the greater strength of not responding to evil - with evil.** ... [ **P A U S E** ] ...

Taking all of Scripture into consideration... there may be times when it is appropriate for us to NOT submit to government authority. If it is a matter of choice between obeying God or obeying a lesser earthly authority... Sometimes believers must be like the Apostles in Acts chapter 5... and obey God... rather than human authority.

Our church took this stand in 2019. Initially we stopped Sunday morning worship for the general public safety. (We did so for a reasonable amount of time.) But once we sensed that government authority was trying to put their lesser authority over God’s supreme authority... our leadership determined that we would obey God’s instruction to not forsake our assembling together (Hebrews 10:24-25.) ... .. But whenever we submit to God over government – we must be willing to suffer any consequences government bestows (and to do so - respectfully... observing Titus 3:2.)

OK... So... **HOW** are we to put aside our natural tendencies... and humble ourselves... in order to submit to others the way Titus 3:1-2 tell us? (Let's get **V E R Y** practical here.) ... The only possible way for us to obey (even HORRIBLE) authority... and to show perfect courtesy to every person... is by focusing our attention on something that is extremely important. It is expressed in five simple words: "For we ourselves once were..."

### **Titus 3:3**

"We lived in malice and envy... being hated and hating one another." ... Paul reminds us that in our relationships we were motivated by getting back at others for what they had supposedly **done** to us ("malice")... or getting **even** because they had what we did not ("envy"). ... Such self-oriented attitudes damaged our relationships... making us "hated" and causing us to hate one another. ... (And guess what...) These motives will not disappear when we become Christians. We still give-in to these temptations!

Paul identified himself (and **us**) fully with the incorrigible... rude... and far-from-God Cretans in the words... "For we ourselves once were . . ." ... Paul never forgot who he was before Jesus Christ met him on the Damascus road. ... He identified with those who were struggling in darkness... sin... shame and guilt. In this way... Paul is a great example to us... not to look at our government or our neighbors in a judgmental way... but to remember what God has done for us... and then behave in ways that demonstrate mercy... love... and patience... the very qualities that we now have... through the mercy of God... that **we did not earn**... nor could we **ever** earn for ourselves.

When Paul says “*we lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another*”... he paints such a dark and damning picture of our former life of unbelief and disobedience. ... He names some of the sins of the human heart... that are so prevalent... and produce such a bitter... and destructive harvest... in the most **UN**godly of all people. He equates **us** – with the typical **Cretan**.

So... let me ask you something... When you have turned on the News in recent days... and you see mobs of crazy people... protesting... rioting... and looting... who look so senseless... hard-heartedly disobedient... deceived... enslaved to their passions... full of envy... and hate – **does it disgust you?** ... It does me.

But if Paul identified himself (and us) with such a disgusting group of his own day... isn't the implication that we should so identify with those who appall us when we turn on the television news...? ... The way Paul describes the **Cretans**... are the very words I would use to describe ANTIFA... and all of our nation's protest movements. (Senseless... hard-hearted... deceived... enslaved to their passions... full of envy... and hate.)

*"For we ourselves once were . . ."*

If you want to make yourself more beautiful... think **deeply** about this!  
(*"For we ourselves once were . . ."*)

Those who are humble and submit to others... are those who can say:

*"I was at one time foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. I lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating others."*



When we recognize that we were rescued from a pit deeper than we could crawl from... that we were saved from a darkness greater than our light could penetrate... that we were delivered from sin greater than our resolve could control — only then ...are we prepared to lead the life of a Believer that God has intended. ... Such humility enables us to proclaim the gospel (eye to eye) with those who believe they have to measure up... (in order to earn salvation)... by their own resolution and strength of character.

But an attractive humility does not come solely as a product of recalling our past. Remembering a desperate past from which there is no rescue can produce pride rather than humility. ... If we think that our rescue from that past (in any measure) came as a consequence of our wisdom... our own will... or strength... then humility will NOT be the outcome. So Paul NEXT goes out of his way to explain how our salvation happened.

Let's go now to the next verse of our passage (verse 4)...

**“BUT”**

OK... stop right there! ... (Believe it or not) ... THIS is the most exciting word in your entire Bible! (You might want to circle it... or underline it.) Why? ... Because it signifies the change in God's heart toward man... who was rebelling against Him... and walking away from Him. "But . . ."

**But**... He sent His Son... "*but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared*"... in other words... when the goodness of God's heart expressed itself in action. ... Only the Living God could do this. He is not like the fickle Roman and Greek gods... or our modern god called “science.” THIS is the Creator in Whom all goodness and truth finds its

source... and He took action on our behalf. It was **God** Who willed our salvation. (And) we are about to see that God (first) had to fix our heart... so that we could respond to Him.

### Titus 3:4-7

No words could express more succinctly... the totally undeserved nature of salvation... since God is the one who gives salvation to us... on the basis of His mercy alone. ... We are the ones who receive it in spite of our being destitute of God-pleasing lives. This is salvation by grace alone.

We did not save ourselves - "He saved us." ... How did He do it? ... Through the absolute miracle of the new birth... the work of the Holy Spirit of God.

"He saved us . . . by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit." ... God offered us salvation in such a way... that we who were **dead** in our trespasses and sins... who had no ability to make the choice... were awakened in our spirits... We **first** had to be regenerated... so that we could hear the Word of God.

Ephesians 2:1 says... "*and you were dead in your trespasses and sins.*" "Dead" means – completely **in**capable of responding to ANY stimuli. Go to the morgue... and prick a dead man with a pin... and see if he responds. Tickle his feet or use the strongest taser at full strength on him. Will he respond...? No! Why...? Because he's dead.

Now... since we were spiritually dead... we (first) had to be spiritually regenerated. Otherwise we cannot respond to ANY kind of spiritual

stimulation. ... So the Holy Spirit was poured out on us... which regenerated us... and now... for the first time... we had a choice to accept Jesus Christ into our hearts and repent of our sins. The Holy Spirit had to flood our hearts (be richly poured out) in order for all this to happen.

The next time some well-intentioned Christian (who says they believe in the "Full-Gospel") tells you that you need to pray for a filling of the Holy Spirit after you have been saved... and they try to make you believe that He wasn't already poured out when you were saved... you point him/her to this passage (Titus 3:4-7.) He is poured out on us richly... (we see here)... as the very means of saving us!

Not only does the Holy Spirit wash and regenerate God's people once for all in the new birth... He also continually renews us inwardly. The word for "renewal" indicates an ongoing activity... rather than one that has stopped. This is because the new birth does not make the believer sinless... it makes us holy. We must allow the Spirit to be constantly renewing our thoughts... purifying our affections... and inclining our will toward holy and heavenly things.

So... WE (who are Christians) have been washed and regenerated by this rich out-pouring... and we are continually being renewed. But notice something else... we have also been justified (Titus 3:7). This wonderful doctrine is discussed in detail in Romans 3:21-8:39. Justification is the gracious act of God whereby He declares a believing sinner righteous. ... God puts to our account... the righteousness of His Son... so that we can be condemned no more. ... Not only does He forget our sins... but He forgets that we were even sinners!

We have been given so much! And how rude we are to forget something so important to our passage... that Paul mentions it twice. It book-ends the beginning and the end of these verses (verse one and verse eight.) Paul just does **not** want us to miss it! ... (LISTEN!) ... We didn't have much of a role in our salvation – but boy(!) do we ever have a role now that we are saved!

### Titus 3:8

**The Christian life is to be a life of active performance!** ... Our salvation is to have visible results. (You see) Paul was unalterably convinced that the new birth would be evident in a new life. The expectation for every believer is that it will be a new life that is exploding in good works.

It has been a little while since I have allowed J. Vernon McGee to address our church... so here he is... on this matter:

*My friend, after you have been saved, God is going to talk to you about good works. Until that time, God is not even interested in your "good works" because what you call a good work, God calls dirty laundry. The righteousness of man is filthy rags in His sight (see Isa. 64:6). He doesn't want any of that. He wants to save you. If you do come to Him just as you are, He will save you, because He has done something for you. He is not asking you to do something—what could you do for God? After you are saved, after you are a child of God, then He wants to talk to you about producing good works. He wants you to get involved in getting out the Word of God to others.*

I think that (we) evangelicals tend to "play down" the need for good works... so much that Titus 3:1 and 8 make us a little nervous. ... Evangelical churches tend to emphasize sound doctrine — and should **continue** to. ... But right belief does not automatically lead to godly behavior.

We **MAY** have been overly influenced by secular humanism... which places faith in education... to reverse the evils of the world. ... “*Simply fill their heads with knowledge,*” says most of our society, “*and, sooner or later, the masses will start behaving properly.*” Education is thought to be the answer to all of our ills... and some of that thinking appears to have seeped into “evangelicalism.”

Biblical and theological knowledge **are** critical ingredients in the believer’s transformation... but right belief is only a part. ... The believer must actively engage in accomplishing good works... (not to earn God’s favor... but because he already HAS God’s favor.) These are critical ingredients... once we have been saved.

Beauty Tip #1. Is that we are to be distinctive from the world in the way we submit to authority and to other people. Beauty Tip #2. Is that we must understand that God saved us in order that we would do good works.

**Ephesians 2:8-10 (ESV)**

*<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

One day, rummaging through a dusty old attic in a small Austrian town, a collector came across a faded manuscript containing many pages of music. It's written for the piano. Curious, he took it to a dealer. The dealer phoned a friend who appeared a half hour later. When he saw the music, he became excited, then puzzled. “*This looks like the handwriting of Mozart himself.*” ... But it wasn't a well-known piece. ... In fact, he had never heard it before.

More phone calls. More excitement. More consultations. It really did seem to be Mozart. And though some parts seemed distantly familiar, it didn't correspond to anything already known in his works.

The manuscript seemed incomplete. There were gaps in the music. Just where it seemed to come to a climax, it seemed to stop and then pick up again later.

Gradually the truth dawned on the excited little group. What they were looking at was determined to indeed be by Mozart. It was, indeed, beautiful, but it was the piano part that involved another instrument or perhaps other instruments. By itself, it was frustratingly incomplete. It was a signpost to something that once was there and might still turn up one day.

That's the position we are in when we are confronted by beauty. Consider when you stand before a great painting. When you stand before the most amazing sunset... or when you see the beauty of a human face (whether it's a little baby or a lovely wise old person.) There is a haunting quality to it, as though it's not just complete in itself. It's a signpost to a larger truth that is just around the corner, just out of sight. We can't grip it, can't get our hands on it. It's as though we're hearing the echo of a voice, and we'd love to hear whose that voice is and what story it's telling.

Part of the joy of beauty is the realization that it is part of a larger whole, most of which appears to be just out of sight. We are drawn forward toward something and left waiting, wondering.

God wants us to be beautiful Christians to draw others forward to Himself. We will if we submit to authority and other people... and if we respond to God's salvation by doing good works.