

The Peaceable Christian

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Bible Verse: Titus 3:2
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What I want to do is start today's message a little differently than normal. I want to read an extended passage from a gospel to prepare us for our time in the book of Titus. So if you would turn to the gospel of Matthew 18. Matthew 18, the teaching of Christ about how we respond to grace has a shaping factor in preparing our hearts for what will come later in Titus. You remember in Matthew 18:21, Peter asked this famous question of our Lord when he came and said to him, "Lord," Matthew 18:21,

21 ..."Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

And then it goes on to illustrate and explain the principle in verse 23,

23 "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. 24 When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. 26 So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.' 27 And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.' 29 So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' 30 But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. 31 So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. 32 Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?' 34 And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. 35 My heavenly Father will also do

the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

Scripture makes it plain that those who have received grace should be glad to extend grace. We who have received forgiveness from God for our trespasses against him should be generous and gracious toward the faults of others, toward the sins of others committed against us.

Look back over at Matthew 6. Jesus even premises the entire matter of prayer, the entire matter of the temporal forgiveness of our sins on this very point when he instructs us in what's called the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6, this principle of forgiving others becomes prominent in the teaching on prayer. And just for the sake of context, you remember Jesus instructed us to pray in this way, verse 9, Matthew 6,

9 ... 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'

Keep reading in verses 14 and 15,

14 "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

So there is this spirit of reciprocal grace that takes place in the heart of a true believer. God shows grace to us, we cry out to him in repentance and faith, the Spirit having led us to that point, and God graciously, freely forgives all of our sins for the sake of his beloved Son. It's a wonderful gift that grace is from God for sinners like you and me, and he gladly, freely, lavishly bestows it on all who believe. The outworking of that shows itself in a heart that is willing to forgive others for the sins that have been committed against us. There is a peaceable forgiveness that comes from God to us in Christ and the consequence of that is that there is a peaceable, gracious forgiveness that works its way out in the heart of every true believer toward those that sin against us. And of course people are going to sin against us, sometimes grievously. We live in a fallen world. We should expect and understand that people are going to wrong us, and the response to that is determined by the grace that we have received.

And perhaps I need to say something like this as we enter into God's word here this morning, to speak about these things, to speak about these tones of a peaceable heart, of a gracious, forgiving spirit, there is something very vital for each one of us to understand about this. When Scripture teaches us Scripture is doing more than simply conveying intellectual information to us for the enrichment of our minds, and I realize that in some circles, that academic approach to Christianity, that dead orthodoxy becomes a way of

life and just becomes a matter of accumulating more and more knowledge without any corresponding life change. Scripture specifically warns us against that. It says knowledge puffs up, knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. You see, Scripture doesn't simply come to instruct our minds. Yes, it does that, but Scripture comes, God brings Scripture to us in order to change us, in order to change our hearts, to shape our character, to make us into new ethical beings, and to make us more like the Christ who forgave us and saved us so that it is a complete contradiction in terms of someone growing in Scripture knowledge and being more and more hardened toward the people that are in their lives. L

This happens, as you know, in every conceivable area and the idea of a contentious Christian and an unforgiving Christian is a contradiction in terms, and beloved, you need to understand that and let that sink deeply into your hearts. You know, not only is it true in general about men in general that men become easily embittered, but even within the church, you don't have to be in any local church for too long until you start to whiff the aroma of an unforgiving spirit of those that are even claiming to be a part of the body of Christ. They set people in opposition to one another. They complain about this or that, and there's just this spirit of grumbling that pervades them like the black cloud that hung over the character in Charlie Brown, always carrying about this dark spirit of grumbling and complaint and an unforgiving spirit. What you and I have to understand, whatever anybody else does, what you and I have to do personally, individually, before the Lord, is to understand that if we have received grace from him, that it shapes the way that we live not just within the body of Christ, but within spouses in their marriages, parents to children and children, to parents. Oh the whole contentious spirit of our age setting people at odds with one another is not the spirit of Christ. It is not the spirit of Scripture, and the Bible could not make that any more clear than it does. And one of the ways, particularly in the enveloping darkness of our culture that Christians will stand distinct is by our willingness to forgive and to be gracious even as the world grows increasingly black in its perspective on men.

Look, beloved, you and I had an infinite debt of guilt before a holy God and if we are in Christ, what has he done with that guilt? He's forgiven it. He has pardoned it. In Christ God has pardoned our sins and accepts us as righteous for the sake of his Son, received by faith alone. That's the biblical doctrine of justification. God declares us righteous for the sake of Christ received by faith alone. God pardons all of our sins. He forgives them. He no longer holds them against us and instead receives us as though we had lived the perfect righteousness of his Son. That is the status that we have before God, and anyone who has a modicum of understanding of their guilt and their transgressions against God, both inherited from Adam and lived out in our daily character and lives, should be overwhelmed by the mercy that has been shown to us, and so overwhelmed by mercy that that no longer simply becomes an intellectual construct in our minds that God has forgiven us and justified us freely for the sake of Christ, it becomes an overwhelming motivating force in our hearts to extend that kind of grace to others. We who have received grace should be willing to extend grace, and the parable that we read from Jesus in Matthew 18 shows what God thinks about those who do not do that. Having received forgiveness and then being unwilling to forgive is inconsistent with a claim to being a

Christian, and Jesus said, "If you do not forgive others, your heavenly Father will not forgive you."

Well, look, you can't simply take that at an intellectual level and say that's nice information to have. This becomes something that each one of us has to process deeply in the in the problem relationships that we have, the people that have harmed us and wronged us in the past. This causes us to reinterpret all of life and the way that we look at the past, the way that we look at the present, the way that we want to live going forward. I understand that forgiveness can be difficult and that sometimes the deep pain and the lasting consequences of the way that someone has sinned against you, you know, you carry that and you're dealing with that on a day-to-day basis but, beloved, we have to look beyond those things and look to what God has done for us. We who have received grace should extend it to others and to extend it from the heart.

Now that mindset helps prepare us for today's text which is in Titus 3 and I invite you to turn there with me. Titus 3. Remember who you were, remember what God has done, and grace and forgiveness and peaceable dispositions flow as a natural result. Let's look at Titus 3:1-7 just to set the context for what lies ahead for the next 2 ½ weeks.

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. 3 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. 4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 5 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 and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Now, last time on Tuesday, and there were so many people here on Tuesday, it was a great encouragement to us to just see the growing interest in the Tuesday study, we looked on Tuesday at verse 1, chapter 3, verse 1, where it says, "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed," and we considered the whole nature of the relationship of the Christian to government and civil authority and what we saw plainly from Scripture is that we submit to civil authority as Christians as part of our Christian life, as part of our sanctification. This is what God calls us to do and in times like this where government becomes increasingly wicked, it becomes an increasing challenge to understand exactly where all of the lines fall, but it's enough for our purposes this morning to just see that the starting point is one of submission, not rebellion against government and it is so important to understand that as the anchor that guides our perspective as we respond to civil authority.

Part of what we saw is that as we consider civil authority, we remember God's sovereignty, that men come into positions of power in an earthly sense by the hand of

God and as a result of that, even if the man is personally unworthy of the honor that this requires us to give, by nature of his office and by nature of who allowed him, who installed him in that position of authority, we understand that there is a deference that is given and a respect that is given for the sake of God, if not for the sake of man. We looked briefly and we reminded ourselves how David refused to raise his hand against King Saul, even though David was already anointed as the future king. He refused on multiple occasions to raise his hand against Saul when he could have killed Saul when Saul was looking to kill him, and repeatedly David said, "I will not raise my hand against the Lord's anointed." And so we remember God's sovereignty and we honor it by submitting to the rulers that he has established. If you missed that, I encourage you to go back and listen to Tuesday's message for the fuller exposition of that.

All of that to say this as we now come to verse 2 in Titus 3, Paul had started with a more limited sphere of dealing with civil authority and responding to civil authority. You'll see that as we go into verse 2, he expands it out, and that principle of a gracious, peaceable demeanor expands out from our fundamental disposition towards civil authority and expands to all men. It expands to all of society. It expands to the unsaved that are around us. God calls us to a gracious demeanor in the midst of a hostile society. He calls us, in other words, to be peaceable Christians. Peaceable Christians. And as I look out on all of your lovely faces and think about, you know, what's happening in the broader church around us, think about the enveloping darkness of the world around us and realizing what God's word says and what so many voices would lead you in a different direction. You know, there's, there's a sense of longing with which I speak to you today, there's a sense of concern with which I speak to you today grateful for many who show this kind of peaceable demeanor, but being mindful also that there are forces in our hearts that would go against this, remnants of evil even in a Christian heart that would rebel against this, mindful that there are voices that claim to be Christians that would call you away from this, let alone the chaos in society around us. And so it's with a sense of urgency, a sense of dependence upon the Holy Spirit, a sense of pleading with you to take to heart what God's word says to you today, not just towards society, but toward all of your relationships, that we turn to God's word now to see what he says to us today.

There are two things that we're going to look at: what to avoid as we seek to become these peaceable Christians, and what to advance. What to avoid, what to advance, and so we're going to split it along two principles here this morning.

Let's look at the first principle, what to avoid, and we're going to see all of this just from verse 2 in chapter 3 of the book of Titus. Christian living, Christian character, the Christian heart means that there are some things that we avoid, there are some things that we turn from, some things that we repent of, and there are other things that we embrace and that we pursue. We put off and we put on in the language of Ephesians 4, and we certainly see this in Titus 3:2 as we look at it again. Paul had told Timothy as a continual aspect of his teaching ministry in the church, chapter 2, verse 15 he says, "These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you." This is a command from God. This is a spirit of authoritative instruction from God to be this

way. This is not optional teaching. This is not something that we can take or leave as we see fit. This is something that we bow before, something that we receive from God.

And so he says in verse 3, remind them. We saw on Tuesday that it's the idea of do this on a repetitive, ongoing, repeated manner. Go back to this principle again and again in being in subjection to authorities. Without stopping to create a new sentence, verse 2 becomes an extension of what Titus is told to teach to the Christians on an ongoing basis, to remind them again and again, and to teach it with all authority and with all command. As we come to God's word and we come in submission to God's word here this morning, this is not an elective that we can take or leave at our own disposition and say, "Well, that's just the way I am. I just happen to be an angry, difficult to live with person and everybody needs to get used to that. Don't mess with me," is the spirit, you know the spirit if not publicly in the privacy of homes you've seen it. "Don't mess with me." Beloved there is no place for that in the Christian life and that hardhearted rebellion is just the manifestation of a heart that may not truly be born again. We just need to call a spade a spade as we consider these things.

Verse 2 is part of the authoritative instruction that Paul tells Timothy to make to Christians on an ongoing basis and what is it we see there in verse 2? Tell them "to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men," not simply those within the body of Christ. The first thing that I want to point out to you is to just notice how comprehensive this verse is. It says to malign no one. Let that sink in. Show consideration for all men. In a negative sense, don't do this to anyone. In a positive sense, do this for everyone. In these brief words, Paul has given us a comprehensive approach to every relationship and every interaction in life. It's astonishing. It's astonishing the breadth of what we are seeing here and that that means that it is impossible for me today to say things out of this verse that do not apply immediately and directly to each and every one of your lives. This applies to every one of you in every relationship that you could possibly conceive of. Scripture has come and, as it were, licked its thumb and put its thumb on each of our lives and says, "Right here is the instruction from the word of God for your life today." And so, you know, we're all brought to bear and brought face-to-face with the word of God and with ourselves in this text that we see here today.

And so what we want to do, we want to ask some questions to find our way through the passage. What is it that we should avoid as we interact with the world around us? What should we avoid as we interact with the unsaved world and in the enveloping darkness that comes around? Well, first of all, we should avoid destructive lips, destructive lips, what comes out of your mouth, in other words, to be mindful of that. You know, David said in Psalm 19, "Lord, let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O my rock and my Redeemer." He knew that his mouth was a reflection of what was going on in his heart, and so he asked God by the Holy Spirit to put a guard on his mouth, for the Spirit to stand as a sentinel over his mouth and to guard it so that nothing would go out that would not be pleasing to God. And we see this as we look at that first clause there in verse 2 where he says "to malign no one." The word translated "malign" here is the word from which we get blasphemy from. In relationship

to men, it refers to slanders and insults, speaking to men, speaking about men in a slanderous, insulting way. So what Paul is doing here is he's placing the bridle, he is placing a hard break upon our temptations and our tendencies to speak harshly about others. It's a call to repent, beloved, of any angry demeanor, any resentful attitudes that you might have toward others, including the unsaved, and when we think about the difficulty in our human flesh, the difficulty of that, we need to understand that the unsaved people in our lives are to be objects of our kindness, not our animosity.

Look at over at 1 Peter. If you turn to the right in your Bible, past Hebrews and past James, you'll come to 1 Peter. 1 Peter 2:12. This is not an isolated theme in Scripture at all. 1 Peter 2:11, the apostle says, "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, 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." Don't return evil for evil. Keep your behavior excellent among those who are not in Christ. Even when they slander you, your godly life, your godly demeanor is a testimony to them that perhaps God would use to change them, to convert them, to convict them, to lead them to Christ so that they, too, could glorify God when he comes.

Look at chapter 3, verse 8, and I'm speaking rather slowly and deliberately this morning to give this time to sink in, for us to all drink deeply from the cup, as it were, that the revitalizing water of God's word would get to the dehydrated places of our hearts and renew it. Verse 8, 1 Peter 3, "To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. For the one who desires life to love and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. He must turn away from evil and do good. He must seek peace and pursue it for the eyes of the Lord or toward the righteous and his ears attend their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

It reminds me of what our Lord said in the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 when he said in verse 9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." Peacemaking, the word there could be translated "peace-doers," those who go about life as doing and making peace in the sphere of relationships that God has given to them. And it's just a natural question at this point, do the people that know you know you as a person of peace or a contentious person? Do they know you as one that is not to be crossed because of the way that you will snap at them if you are crossed, or is there a softness about you? Is there an approachability about you? Is there a kindness about you that sends forth the aroma of a peacemaking God to those that are about?

Now I need to say something here to bring a biblical balance to what we say lest I be misunderstood, far more importantly, lest Scripture be misunderstood, understand that kindness does not make us passive and indifferent about the entire matter of righteousness. Parents, while they are to be kind, are still to discipline their children and to raise them in the instruction of the Lord. An employer still has the right, the prerogative and the responsibility to discipline and even dismiss employees who are not

doing their job, who are undermining the workplace. A church has responsibility to exercise discipline when it's necessary in the lives of sinning members. If you read earlier in Matthew 18, you would see that. Kindness does not eviscerate the principle of accountability. Kindness does not mean that we refuse and we become indifferent to righteousness. Kindness does not mean that we simply step back and allow unrighteousness to reign in the realms that are around us. Kindness does not mean that false teachers are allowed to just take root in the church and spread their destructive heresies without any kind of resistance. We're not talking about that kind of passivity. What we're talking about is in the realm of personal relationships and in the realm of interactions with people. Beloved, it is one thing for teaching elders in a church to expose and to refute false philosophies, to refute heresy, to warn of specific teachers lest you be misled by them. It's one thing for that to happen in the defense of the gospel. That's not what we're talking about today, though. It's one thing for elders to uphold truth, it's another thing for you to call someone an idiot. It's another thing for you to be harsh with a fast-food worker, insulting to someone who you think is beneath you on the human food chain. And so that's what Paul is talking about here to Titus, to avoid that kind of destructive interaction on a personal basis as we move about in the world around us.

Go back to Titus 3 now. Titus 3, because there's something else to avoid, not simply the words that come out of your mouth, "to malign no one," we're also to avoid combative spirits, contentious hearts, contentious attitudes and God's word does so much to shape our demeanors here. Look at what Paul goes on to say, remembering that Paul is writing the very word of God, he has written the word of God for us. This is not simply a human writing from the Apostle Paul. It is that but it is a human writing that came by direct inspiration from God so that this is the very word of God that we read and this is the word, authoritative command of God to his people this is how we are to live and how we are to be. He says "to malign no one, to be peaceable, to be gentle." And that word "peaceful" here, beloved, it means to be someone who is not disposed to fight, to not be someone who is itching for conflict, someone that is looking for an argument, looking for ways to disagree, looking for ways to insult and criticize other people, looking for ways to insult those that are around you. And so to be peaceful means that you recognize that tendency in you and you repent of it. This passage is a call for you to repent of that disposition to anger and contention and grumbling against others that so many of us fall into, to repent of that and to embrace something different instead.

Now, again, Paul is addressing our personal demeanor, our disposition as we walk through life. He's not addressing the offense of the gospel. The gospel itself is offensive. Jesus said that he did not come to bring peace but a sword, that following Christ would set father against son, mother against daughter. There is an intrinsic divisive element to Christ as men follow him and leave the world behind. That's not what this passage is talking about. The gospel has that effect but we're not to carry a carnal, sinful disposition of conflict in our hearts as we deal with others. Stated a different way, beloved, you should not be itching for a fight. You should not be itching for combat with the unsaved people in your lives. Maybe it comes but let it come as their response to you. Let it come as their response to Christ rather than something that you provoke because you're walking in a way that is not consistent with being filled with the Spirit.

Go back to Matthew Chapter 5 again as we see Jesus working this out, showing us, showing us in specific ways how we are to pursue this in our lives and how this works itself out in personal relationships. Matthew 5:43. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" You don't have to be a Christian to be kind to people who are kind to you. There is nothing virtuous, intrinsically Christian about that at all. The test is how you respond to people that take an adversarial position towards you. Jesus goes on and says in verse 47, "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?" Jesus says you're called to a higher standard. The call of God, the character of God is more lofty than the carnal tit-for-tat that takes place in human relationships. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. The Christian spirit of it is I'll scratch your back whether you scratch mine or not. And Jesus goes on to say, "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

And so in the whole context, turning back to Titus 3, in the whole context of all of this, what we find is the call of Scripture is that Christians should be peaceable citizens who love even their enemies, that are marked by a kind, gentle disposition. Now look, we understand that individually, as a church, as a local church, I mean, and Christians more generally, the church universal, we understand that people will twist our motives, they will misrepresent our teaching and our actions, they will slander us and try to cause all kinds of mischief. We understand that. It comes with the territory. We understand that our Lord suffered that far more than we ever could. Christ, walking among men as the sinless Son of God, teaching truth, doing deeds of kindness, and what did they do with him? What did they do when they had the Son of God in the flesh in their hands? They misrepresented him. They lied about him. They crucified him. Well, if we follow him, isn't it obvious that that's what's going to come to us also? Jesus said, "If they hated Me, they'll hate you also." In 1 John it says can't be surprised, beloved, if the world hates you. The world has hated the people of God since Cain killed Abel in Genesis 4. This is deeply rooted. We're not going to change it here on earth. The question becomes how do we respond to that? We realize that God's word convicts men of sin. How are we going to live in reaction to living in a fallen world?

Look beloved, I want to say something here because it's in the context of living in society, Christians living in society as Titus 3:1-2, and I just want to say this and I say this without fear of contradiction. I have never seen anyone who claims to be a Christian who was preoccupied with political matters. I've never seen a Christian who was completely consumed with political matters who actually had a peaceable demeanor about them. The preoccupation with fighting against political opponents poisons their heart in a way that starts to spill out in the way that they respond to others. And those of you that follow politics, I'm not going to tell you not to, I'm just going to warn you, caution you, admonish you, watch your heart. Watch your heart as the political

consultants ask for your money. Watch your heart as the news reports of your chosen news outlet come to you and provoke you to anger so that you'll come back to follow up on the story with the next click-bait thing that is put in front of you. Beloved, you must view these things from this spirit. You must view your approach to life through this lens, that Scripture, God, Christ himself as Master and Lord over you says, "malign no one, be peaceable, be gentle, show every consideration for all men." If your approach to Christianity and your approach to living in a fallen world makes you angry and viewing half the world as your political enemies and enemies to your soul, oh beloved, you're missing the point. You're missing the point. There is a way to walk through that without affirming the evil and yet maintaining your own Spirit-filled disposition in life. The fruit of the Spirit is not angry politics. It's not. The fruit of the Spirit, say it a lot here, don't I? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. What kind of person are you going to be, beloved, that's the question. Malign no one. Be peaceable. That's what we avoid.

Well, what is it that we advance in our pursuit of godliness? Paul calls us to a kind and peaceable spirit instead. Instead of that angry disposition, instead of that reactive carnality, in every political season, you know, I don't know how many presidential elections I've been in ministry through, probably seven or eight, I don't know. Every political season, every presidential election brings out the worst in people because they just get so preoccupied with the future of passing earthly things and, beloved, as we live in society, as we exercise our civic duties and exercise your civic duties, go and vote, I vote, that's not what I'm talking about. I'm not saying that the political parties are of equal moral value. We're not talking about them. We're talking about you. We're talking about what kind of people the people of God are supposed to be. What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ as you walk through the world? What does the Bible call us to do? Forget the solicitations, forget the television advertisements, and justice simply come to Scripture and let the purity of the word instruct you on the kind of person that you are to be.

What is it that we are to advance? Paul calls us to a kind and peaceable spirit instead. Look at verse 2 with me again. He says "to malign no one, to be peaceable," we've looked at that, doing away with the insulting manner of life. He says, "be peaceable, to be gentle, showing every consideration for all men." Gentle has the idea being fair and reasonable as you interact with others. In other words, to view unsaved men with a gracious tolerance that in keeping with Matthew 5 that we saw earlier, that there is a prayerful approach that we have to the unsaved people in our lives and in the world around us. We realize as it says in verse 3 here in Titus 3, we realize that we were once a part of that, we also once were foolish, disobedient, malicious, envious, hateful, hating one another. That's what you and I were like. That's a biography of your past as an unsaved man. That's what you were like, certainly it was what I was like. Oh, the angry, arrogant man that I was. It was a mercy of God to put him to death. When we remember that we once were like that and that we have received grace for our infinite load of guilt that we did not deserve in Christ, and our hearts are warmed and overwhelmed by that and gratitude that the wicked servant did not show in Matthew 18, we realized that having received so much grace, that the only right and proper and desirable thing for us is to have a

disposition that is gracious toward the people around us, that is like the disposition of grace that God showed to us in our evil, wicked rebellion against him. Beloved, this is not an advanced course in Christianity. This is Christianity 101. This is basic. We view unsaved men with a gracious tolerance, we do not approve of their sin, and yet we understand that it is not given to us to compel men not to sin. We can't stop people from sinning if they're bent on that, and so we extend kindness to them instead of a severe spirit.

Look back just two or three pages in your Bible, depending on how big your large print is, look back to 2 Timothy 2. This is all over the place in Scripture, and you know and I understand something, you know, you don't build a big following in social media by talking like this. It's much easier to generate a following by being contentious and pointing out and making people angry but that's not what Scripture tells us to be like. 2 Timothy 2:24, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all." There it is again, beloved, comprehensive in its statement. Be kind to all, "able to teach, patient when wronged." What more could the Bible say to contradict the retaliatory spirit of our age and the retaliatory spirit of our carnal flesh? What more could God say than what is said right there? Do not be quarrelsome. Be kind to all. You say, "I like it better when the preacher is speaking against the bad guys. I don't like, I don't like this." Well, the bad guys, so to speak, aren't in the room, different kind of bad guys here, our sinfulness is in the room and Scripture calls us to correct that. "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."

If Scripture is informing our thinking and our affections, we look at unsaved people and we realize some basic things about them. 1. They are just like we used to be before Christ saved us and so there is a common point of natural sympathy that should go to them. We realized that God has been gracious to us in Christ and we should be extending grace to those around. We look on them and we see they've been blinded by Satan. If ever there was an epic in church history for us to see so plainly how blinded people are by the devil, today is a great one to see what that looks like and to realize that as the dupes of the devil, to realize the danger that they're in, to realize the pitiable condition of their miserable souls and the judgment of God that awaits all of the children of the devil. Isn't there something in your heart, Christian, that can look on that with sympathy, with kindness? There are some of you that are great about that and I wish I was more like you in that way, but they're under the snare of the devil. The least that we can do is show them a little bit of earthly kindness in the midst of it. It may be the only kindness they get throughout all of eternity.

And so we extend kindness instead of a severe spirit. Go back to Titus 3. He says, Titus 3:2, "showing every consideration for all men." And so that restrains our natural impulses toward retaliation in the face of insults. Look back, actually look over to the right again to the book of James 3. Now there's a certain brand of so-called Christianity that aimed at a certain brand of masculinity emphasizing cigars and whiskey, believe it or not, for those

of you that haven't ever seen it, that is just designed to stimulate men against this demeanor. The Bible won't have it. The Bible won't have that kind of arrogant approach. James 3:13, "Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

Beloved, all of this is embedded in your heart by the indwelling Holy Spirit. It's just to be cultivated. The Spirit of God helps us in our weakness to make us into people like this. But there is a kindness, there is a basic dignity to be shown to sinner and to saint alike. We show patience to those outside and inside of the church. Beloved, remember Jesus Christ, our Lord, our Master, our King, the epitome of virtue, the epitome of the character of God as he was being crucified said, "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they're doing." Is it conceivable that he would have his disciples be less gracious than he himself is? Everything we've seen in Scripture answers the question.

Look at it from another perspective and I have images of friends in my life from decades ago as I ask you this. Look back on your life before you were a Christian. Who was it that influenced you for Christ? What kind of person was it that came and made the gospel known to you, made it attractive to you? Who was it in your earliest days as a Christian who influenced you in the direction of godliness? Think about names. Think about friends. Maybe they're long out of your life but you remember who came and handed you a tract. You remember who spoke the gospel to you. You remember who showed kindness to you when you were a cursing, abusive person in response. Yeah, I'm speaking out autobiographically right now. I remember that. And ask yourself this question: was the person who influenced you for Christ, was that a kind person or an angry one? Did an angry person lead you to Christ, a contentious person talking about the issues of the day? Did that person lead you to the foot of mercy found at the cross of Jesus Christ? Was it an angry person who softened your heart to the pleas of the gospel, come and drank the waters of life freely and without cost? Or was it someone who spoke to you, as it were, put their arms around you and said, "Friend, I'm praying for you." Sorry, memories come up from time to time. Was it the angry person that swayed you to Christ or was it a person of kindness whose life and words said, "I care about you. No strings attached. Consider Christ. Come to Christ. You don't have to speak that way. You don't have to be that way. Come to Christ."

You see, beloved, Christian people should be defined by that kind of humble kindness. The people honor Christ who showed grace to you and, beloved, on a human level, just extending it out a little bit, Christ always preeminent but just thinking about the kind people who influenced you for the gospel, maybe it was apparent when you were still little, but honor them by showing the kindness that influenced you. This impacts how we treat our political opponents. It treats how we respond to people at Frisch's. It affects how

you treat people of different socioeconomic and cultural ethnic backgrounds. And, beloved, we can live this way and we should live this way as we recall the mercy that Christ showed to us.

Look at it again in Titus 3. We saw who we were, verse 3, hateful, hating one another. What was it that turned the tide in our hearts? Ultimately, it was the Spirit of God engendering faith in us through the word of God and this was motivated, this came to us in kindness from God himself. 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 and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Beloved, look at the character of God that led you to become a Christian, that saved you, and look at the words that are describing it. Verse 4, the kindness of God. The love of God. The mercy of God. Verse 5, the grace of God. Verse 7, kindness, love, mercy, and grace. Look at what saved you and understand that that is what is to shape you as you go forward in this fallen world. God showed grace to us in our hostility toward him, having received grace in our hostile hearts, now we show grace in a hostile world.

Let's pray together.

Father, how deeply we thank You for the grace that was shown to us in Jesus Christ. Thank You for Your love, Your mercy, Your kindness, Your patience. Father, thank You that through the work of Your Holy Spirit, You brought Your word to us, someone, somewhere, loved us enough to present the word of God to us in whatever form it actually came. Father, looking back on our past, those of us that were saved in our adult lives, we look back and, you know, we remember those we remember... Lord, we remember those wonderful Christians that showed kindness to us. We remember the gentle way that they approached us in the self-sacrificing way that they dealt with us either as an unsaved person or as a new babe in Christ, and they came in and they cared for us and they nurtured us in Christ. Father, thank You for that and make us like that as individuals and as a church going forward. You have been very, very good to us, Father. We want our lives to reflect Your glory and Your grace to the world around us. Help us to do that, to avoid the things that would poison it, to advance the things of the Spirit that would enhance it. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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