**Grace That Behaves**

**Titus 2:15-3:2 (ESV)**

March 20, 2022

Dr. Ritch Boerckel

As we open up Scripture today, we’re going to be looking in Titus. We’re in this series in this little book of Titus. It’s a word of instruction from the Apostle Paul to a young pastor, a young church leader by the name of Titus. Titus is called to appoint elders in every church throughout the region of Crete so that the elders then might set in order the things that remain. So it’s a great letter that teaches so much about the church, God’s design for the church, God’s intention for the church, for us as people. We’re going to be looking at Titus chapter 2, verse 11 and then I’ll read through chapter 3, verse 2. Last week we walked through verses 11-14. Today we’re going to be looking at specifically, really practical verses, verse 15 and then 1 and 2 of chapter 3. So let’s read God’s holy Word together.

***11*** *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,* ***12*** *training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,* ***13*** *waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,* ***14*** *who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.* ***15*** *Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.* ***1*** *Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,* ***2*** *to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.*

May God encourage us through His Word today!

Somewhere along the way, you have likely heard of the Duck Test. If an animal looks like a duck and walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it’s probably a duck.This is called inductive reasoning. (Laughter!) It implies that we can identify an unknown object by observing some known qualities and behaviors about that object and that the identification doesn’t have to have regard for what other people might call the object. We can obtain proof for ourselves.

Admittedly, this Duck Test is not entirely full proof.But so far in my own experience, every time I have come across a creature that looks like a duck and quacks like a duck and walks like a duck, it turns out that it’s a duck. Applied to the Christian life, we might ask,“If a person behaves like an unbeliever, talks like an unbeliever, thinks like an unbeliever and relates to others like an unbeliever, then he probably is an unbeliever.”Our observation doesn’t have to rest upon self-identification or maybe what other people would call that individual. But there is an observation we would make that Scripture also makes for us. The Duck Test calls every follower of Jesus to ask the question,does my behavior match my confession? When others look at my life, do they see in my behavior, in my speech and in my lifestyle, a follower of Jesus? Do I look like a child of God or do I look like a child of this world?

Now it’s really important to observe that a duck doesn’t become a duck by mimicking duck actions. There is not any other animal, not any person that could simply become a duck by acting like one. Rather, a duck is given a duck nature by God. The duck nature inside of that creature then causes that creature to behave in ways that are consistent with its kind. So it is the internal nature that precedes and then produces the external behaviors.

So too, the Bible teachesus that a child of God doesn’t become a child of God by mimicking how God’s children think or talk or behave or relate. That explanation is completely upside down, according to Scripture. A child of God first receives the nature of God through spiritual rebirth. It’s a rebirth that is rooted in faith in Jesus. Then this new life of God that has been placed in the soul of the believer takes flight in real ways that we would expect if there is real God-life, divine life, a divine nature inside of a person’s soul. That divine nature will take action in one’s thinking and behaving and speech.The spiritual life inside the follower of Jesus precedes and produces the external behaviors consistent with Jesus. The Apostle John writes about these matters brilliantly. In his gospel, he talks about what must happen in order for a person to become a child of God. John says this.

**John 1:12-13** But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

One receives a divine nature through spiritual rebirth, an act of God’s grace. So if we ask the question, “How does a person become a child of God?” it’s through rebirth. It’s a rebirth that is set upon throughfaith in Jesus. We don’t become children of God through obedience to God’s law. We don’t become children of God through creedal affirmations. We don’t become a child of God through religious ritual, like baptism or church membership. In order to be a child of God, we must be born of God. There has to be a miracle that is wrought in our soul. This miracle is available to us through Christ, as we receive Him, as we place our faith in Him. Then God brings about this new birth, this new life. Yet, this same Apostle John affirms that we can apply the Duck Test to discern if we are children of God. John writes

**1 John 3:7** Little children, let no one deceive you.

He’s talking about this issue of how do I know whether I’m a child of God? He gives one of the tests that we can use to discern whether or not there is real spiritual life in our soul. He goes on to say

**1 John 3:7-9** …Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning,

It can’t be this deliberate ongoing habitual lifestyle of disobedience. He can’t do that

**1 John 3:9** …because he has been born of God.

Again, we don’t become born of God through obedience. But once we are born of God by God’s grace through faith in Jesus, then our nature changes the way we act. It changes the way we behave. Then John says this.

**1 John 3:10** By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

There are a couple of really important questions that flow from our consideration of John’s writings. The first and primary question that we must ask ourselves is, am I born of God? Have I received the life of God in my soul? I would ask you to think about that question for yourself, today. I don’t ask whether you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord. I don’t ask whether you have been baptized. I don’t ask whether you have joined a church, maybe this church or some other church. I ask the question, have you been born of God? Only those who have been born of God are children of God. God makes this free offer through Christ to come to Christ. Christ is willing to produce a miracle in our soul. He is willing to take a dead soul and fuse the life of God in our very person. He is willing to take this old heart that was only a heart of rebellion and darkened by our sin in our understanding of God, and give us a new heart. He gives us a new heart that is soft, a new heart that is responsive to God, a new heart that worships Him. Are you born of God?

If we would say, yes, I believe I’m born of God, the second question is does my behavior reflect the new life that God has given me? How we behave matters to God. What a terrible distortion of the Gospel to think otherwise. We are saved on the basis of God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, but good works matter to God because the proclamation of the Gospel matters to God. If He has placed His life in the souls of people who do not look at all like Him, like members of His family, then His reputation is damaged over and over and over again. So God cares deeply about how we behave, about how we live, how we relate, how we talk in this present age.

This is a very practical three verses that we’re going to look at this morning. The main idea we’re going to trace is that God’s grace trains us to behave like Jesus in all our relationships. Particularly here this morning, we’re going to look at the relationships with the unbelieving world, with people in our neighborhood and our work places, people who have secular authority over us. We looked last week at verses 11 and 12. There we discovered God saying

***11*** *For the grace of God has appeared,*

It has appeared in Christ Jesus. The grace of God isn’t merely promised or explained as it had been in the Old Testament. Now in this age, the grace of God has appeared. It has become manifest in the Person of Jesus. This grace of God in Jesus brings

*salvation for all people,*

There is not one person that can say, “I don’t have access to the grace of God” or “The grace of God is not offered to me.” No, this grace of God that appears in Christ is offered to every person. It’s for all people. This grace of God, when it is received, it trains God’s people.

***12*** *training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions,*

It trains us to say No to our fleshly lusts. It trains us also

*and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,*

Right in the middle of a world of darkness, a world that is in chaos, this grace trains us, God’s people, to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives. God’s grace teaches us. God’s grace empowers us to live a kind of life that we could never live through our own self-effort.

Now, some of God’s children open their hearts wider to this training in grace than other believers. So not every member of Jesus’ church receives the same measure of grace. It’s not because the same measure of grace isn’t offered. It’s just that some of us have narrowed the little window in which God would pour His grace of training into our lives, and some have opened wide. But there is a great distance between the progress in practical holiness of one believer and the other. We should expect that in our observation. The Bible teaches us that is true. The message today is for all of us to think about the window in which God’s grace is poured in our life and how it’s influencing our behavior, how it’s influencing the way we live.

God teaches us that this process of conforming us to the image of Jesus, a process called sanctification, is a process that is filled with opposition. It is filled with opposition both through some principles that are at work inside of us and also filled with opposition by some principles that are at work outside of us as well. But this process of growing in practical godliness, of behaving as a child of God, is called a war. It is a battle. It is a fight. No one learns to behave like Jesus without a hard-won fight. So if we would win, if we would grow in Christlikeness, we must fight with the weapons that God provides for us.

Paul reminds Titus, this church leader over the churches in Crete, he first says to appoint elders, spiritual leaders, in every church in every town. We get the idea that the church in Crete has grown toward worldliness. It’s not growing toward godliness. It’s growing toward worldliness. It’s so important to Paul that Titus would remain behind because the church needed someone to declare Gospel truth and even to bring exhortation, correction and rebuke to the church. We learn from Matthew 28 that Jesus commissions every church with authority to make disciples. Remember that great commission. These words were spoken to the apostles, those who would be the foundation of the church. Right before Jesus ascends into heaven, He says this.

**Matthew 28:18** All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

He says that because He wants them to know that it’s by His authority that they’re going out into the world to make disciples. It’s not on the basis of some vision that they’ve come up with that would be kind of exciting and uplifting to their own soul. No, this is the authority of Jesus that is behind a command for these apostles and ultimately for the whole church to engage with. He says

**Matthew 28:19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

In other words, we make disciples by bringing the Gospel to unsaved people so that they receive the life of God in Jesus Christ and that they become children of God through faith in Christ and then they identify with Jesus through baptism. Then they become members of God’s family in the church through baptism. So that’s the first step of disciple-making. But then He says this disciple-making, this commission continues.

**Matthew 28:20** teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

He doesn’t say you have the authority to teach some of what I have commanded you. He says I’m authorizing you to teach every part. In fact, stewardship for a disciple-making pastor like Titus requires that Titus would teach everything that Jesus commands and to leave nothing out. Then Jesus, in giving this commission, He gives comfort. He says

**Matthew 28:20** …And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

He says, “I know you’re going to need me. I know it’s going to get discouraging. But I am with you. I’ve authorized you. I’ve commissioned you and my presence will go with you through the Holy Spirit.”

So at the end of chapter 2 and the beginning of chapter 3 of Titus, Paul gives Titus some really practical advice on how to be a disciple-making pastor. He gives him advice on how to help members of the church to be trained by the grace of God to live godly lives in this present age. We’re going to look at two pieces of counsel today that Paul gives to Titus as Titus is a disciple-making pastor.

**Counsel #1: Retain spiritual authority.**

Don’t abdicate spiritual authority that God has given you. Retain it. Use it for good.

***15*** *Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.*

The church will be lost if spiritual leaders in the church abdicate spiritual authority that God gives to them. This is authority by which to lead God’s people into the grace of the Gospel and into the fullness of obedience. If the church is to be a place of order in a world of chaos, spiritual leaders must retain God-given spiritual authority to make disciples. Now of course, there are many, many, many limits to the authority that God gives to any human person.Yet here Paul reminds Titus that God gives him authority to declare these things. “God has given you, Titus, a stewardship. With that stewardship, He has given you authority to declare these things.” You might underline those three words.

What are these things that Titus is to declare? I think these things include all the content of chapter 2. I believe it includes these counter-cultural applications of the Gospel written for us here in God’s inerrant Word in verses 2-6 of Titus 2. Declare these things. What things? Declare that

**Titus 2:2-6** Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.

Upon reading these things, surely we understand why Titus had to be exhorted by Paul to declare these things.These things cause some people’s blood to boil. That was true in the 1st Century and it is true today. These things invite condemnation and scorn and slander and abuse of many kinds. These things open the door to trouble for any spiritual leader when they are declared, and indeed, for the whole of the church there is disruption.These things are topics that are so easy to neglect, yet Paul continues. He says to declare these things and now he presses this urging to retain spiritual authority even deeper into young Titus. Notice these words. He says to exhort. That’s even stronger than declare. Paul says

*exhort and rebuke with all authority.*

Here is this young, flawed pastor being urged by Paul not only to publicly declare these matters, but to go personally to members in the churches here in this region of Crete and exhort individuals to live according to these things. He is even to rebuke church members who are not living lives consistent with the Gospel in this regard. Does anybody want to volunteer? Do you see why Titus needed to be exhorted by Paul? “Declare these things, Titus. Retain your spiritual authority. If you back away from this, then you back away from your commission. If you back away from making disciples, you will weaken the church. In fact, you will allow the church to be infected by sin because of your timidity. Be fearless, Titus. Hold onto the authority that God has given you. Will you suffer for it? Yes, you can expect to suffer for it. But Titus, stand in the gap for the glory of God. Stand in the gap for the good of God’s people in the church.”

***15*** *Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority.*

Ask any mature disciple of Jesus this question. When you learned to follow Jesus, did God use exhortation and rebuke to help you grow in Christlikeness? So look around you. Ask anyone that you respect who is following Jesus and has done it over time and they are now walking with Christ and they’re living a life that reflects Christ. Ask them, did God use exhortation or rebuke to help you? I do not know one who wouldn’t say, “Of course He did. I needed a lot of exhortation. I needed a lot of rebuke.” Thankfully, I had a disciple-making dad who gave me a lot of exhortation and who gave me a lot of rebuke. I also had some disciple-making friends and disciple-making youth leaders and disciple-making pastors. Both publicly and personally I was exhorted and I was rebuked. I needed that because that’s a work of grace in the Gospel that we should expect. God has given us His Word that is inerrant and authoritative. Every ministry of the Word we need for our souls. We need to be instructed. We need to be encouraged. But we also need to be corrected. We need reproof. We need rebuke. We need every ministry that the Word of God offers our souls.

Modern spiritual leaders need to hear the words that Paul gives to Titus because we, like Titus, live in an age that equates the authority to declare with a dictatorial spirit. We, like Titus, live in an age that equates the authority to give exhortation with personal arrogance. We, like Titus, live in an age that equates the authority to give a rebuke to personal animus. So these spiritual leaders who apply Titus 2:15 can expect some harsh accusations. They can expect trouble. Titus knows that. Paul knows that. Paul is saying to still stay at it. Stay at the work that God has given to you.

Who gives spiritual leaders authority to declare the truth and to exhort members and to rebuke members when they refuse to obey? The answer Paul says is God does. This is all part of disciple-making. Jesus says

**Matthew 28:18-20** All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

When God called me to be a pastor as a high school student, I was teaching some Bible Studies and many of my peers were coming to Christ. Many of them were growing as a result of the teaching of the Word. I was awakened to a calling that God gave to me over some time. It wasn’t sort of like an ‘Aha’ moment, but over time, God made it clear that He would have me follow this path to give my life to proclaim the Gospel and to make disciples wherever He has me.

When God called me to be a pastor, I thought much of the privilege of teaching the wonders and the beauty of God’s Gospel. I had had the privilege of teaching that and just digging in and seeing more of its beauty and wonder and worshiping God through that process. I thought it was going to be awesome to be able to live a life like this. When God called me, I thought much of the lives transformed through the power of the Gospel, through the power of the Word. I was seeing that at work in my peers. I rejoiced to be able to be part of this. I thought much of the opportunity to come alongside people who are in need who are discouraged and who are even despairing, and to share the hope that God gives. I saw how God had ministered to so many.

But do you know what I didn’t think about when God called me as a high school student to be a pastor? Do you know what never crossed my mind? It never crossed my mind that God was calling me to exhort and rebuke people. I didn’t think that was even going to be part of it. I didn’t read Titus close enough to know that is just part of the commission of God to spiritual leaders in the church. This is just a necessary function. To this day, this part of an elder’s stewardship is daunting and is overwhelming. I have sometimes wished for a way to be free of it. I think that’s what is happening with Titus. I think he has experienced some of the bite that comes along with that ministry. I think he says, “I love this part of the ministry. I want to stay in this lane.” But Paul says you can’t just stay in that lane. You can’t abdicate the responsibility and the authority given you to exhort and rebuke. Stay there. Yes, it’s going to be hard, but stay there. This is where Jesus is. This is Jesus’ work in His church, to purify her and to make her a precious purified treasure of His own possession, to be presented on the last day holy, sanctified for the glory of Christ.

To be sure, spiritual leaders must take great care not to abuse the authority that God has given them. We must examine the Scriptures carefully before issuing any rebuke and any exhortation because our authority rests in God’s Word and not in our own opinions. We must give exhortations and rebuke with a gentleness and a patience. We know that the anger of man doesn’t accomplish the righteousness of God. We must not perceive ourselves as overlords in a church family. We’re sheep as well as shepherds. We need the Shepherd and we need exhortation and rebuke just as much as any sheep does. Peter, I think says it best in 1 Peter chapter 5 when he speaks to spiritual leaders in the church.

**1 Peter 5:1-4** So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Paul is reminding Titus of these very same things. He says

***15*** *Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority.*

Then he says this fascinating little sentence at the end.

*Let no one disregard you.*

How do we not let people disregard us? I think what he is saying is let no one bring such discouragement, let no one bring such rejection that you back away and that you shrivel up into a corner and that you abdicate spiritual responsibility. Paul knows it will be tempting for Titus at some point in his pastoral life to say, “Who needs this hassle?” Paul is saying,“Titus, don’t let them get to you. Do not let them disregard you. Do not let disobedient believers push you away from this calling to minister the Word in all of its workings to the church. Boldly stay the course. Don’t abdicate this necessary role in Jesus’ church. You will let others disregard you if you stop doing the work of teaching the Gospel with all of its implications. Titus, be bold. Don’t quit. You will let those who oppose the righteousness of the Gospel to win if you respond to opposition by quieting the voice that I have given you to proclaim my truth, my Gospel, my Word.”

I think about Moses and Pharaoh in this regard. Pharaoh disregarded Moses, but Moses didn’t let Pharaoh disregard him. We can’t change the way people respond to us, but we can change the way we respond when we are disregarded. I think that’s what he is driving at. You remember the story. God says, “Go tell Pharaoh to let my people go.” Ten times Moses goes. Each time, he is disregarded. He is treated with contempt. Moses goes back, but he didn’t let Pharaoh disregard him. How so? Because he just kept coming back. He just kept coming back and telling the truth with the same boldness and with the same conviction. So yes, Pharaoh disregarded him all the way to the end. When the Egyptian army were drowned in the sea, there was disregard from Pharaoh to Moses. But Moses didn’t let him disregard him. He didn’t let his negative response impact the commission that God had given him to do what is good, to offer grace even to Pharaoh and offer redemption for a people who would respond.

What are some applications? The first application is spiritual leaders, be courageous. Be brave. Be faithful to your calling. Be zealous in fulfilling every part of the ministry of the Word. I think this application is narrow for elders, but it’s broadened also to other spiritual leaders. I think there are women who are spiritual leaders among women. I think there are parents that are spiritual leaders in their homes. Be courageous! Whatever authority or commission God has given you in a place of spiritual leadership, be faithful. Do not let others disregard you. Don’t let a negative impact cause you to move away or abdicate. Yes, we learn wisdom. Yes, we learn shepherding and gentleness, but do not back away. Be bold.

Then to church members, be humble. Again, while I’m a shepherd in a church, I’m also a member of a church. Let us be one of the members who receive every part of the Word’s ministry in our soul. Let us be ones who bring joy to our spiritual leaders by welcoming the ministry of the Word. The first counsel Paul gives to Titus as he leads this church to behave in a way that is consistent with the Gospel and that adorns the Gospel is to retain spiritual authority.

**Counsel #2: Remind the redeemed to behave themselves.**

He is going to give seven specific commands in verses 1 and 2 to remind God’s people to ultimately behave themselves. God’s grace grants us a whole new identity. Everything becomes new. The old is gone. The new has come. We once were a people who were enslaved to sin and now we’re redeemed. We’re bought with a price. We are God’s own possession. Once we were a people who were apathetic towards worship and apathetic toward doing the will of God. Now we’re zealous for good works. We want to do something that counts for eternity and for the glory of God. Once we were a people who were unclean. We were laden down with shame and guilt. But now we’re purified. We’re forgiven, but we’re also being actively presently practically purified so that sin has less and less and less of a hold upon our lives. That’s who we are. What Paul is encouraging Titus to do is he says to remind the people to behave in a way that is commensurate with their new identity. They have a new identity. Remind them to live it out in very practical ways. Remind them to behave.

***1*** *Remind them*

He’s not telling Titus to give them all new truth, although there are some new aspects of the Gospel that the apostles teach us. But here he says to remind them of old truth. Remind them of basic behaviors that are consistent with the grace of the Gospel and they’re consistent with the glory of God.

Why do we need to be reminded of truth we’ve already learned and heard? The answer is because we have a sin principle still at work inside of us. This sin principle is still as blind as the sin principle in us was before we were redeemed. It still is self-centered. It still is deceitful. It still is forgetful. It still is resistant to God’s Spirit. It still is disobedient to the sovereign will of the Lord. We have this new heart, but this sin principle is still residing in us, the Scriptures teach.We should expect a war waged inside of us every day. So we all need constant reminders of who we are in Christ, who Christ is, what He has done for us, who the Holy Spirit is and how He works actively in us, and what exactly it is that God calls us to do in our practical everyday relationships.

Martin Luther had it right when he said we, God’s people, are at the same time saints and sinners. As believers in Jesus, we have been given new hearts. We’ve been justified. But yet as believers living in this present age, our old hearts are still present. They’re still active and they’re still filled with wickedness and deceit. We have a new heart that desires to behave in ways that adorn the Gospel, yet we still have a natural heart tugging at us with the same self-interest that it always has. This is why the continued application of grace is so vital to the health of our souls. This is why we need to gather together in community and hear the Word and remind ourselves of so many basic truths about righteousness and about God and about the Gospel. Being trained by grace to say No to worldly passions and to live godly lives in this present age is a lifelong process that requires constant reminders.

Kimberly and I often read a devotion from Charles Spurgeon. This week, one of the devotions was from Psalm 19:13. There, David prays

**Psalm 19:13** Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me!

This is the prayer of a man who is described as a man after God’s own heart. Yet he prays,

**Psalm 19:13** Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me!

Spurgeon writes, “Did holy David need to pray like this? How needful, then, such a prayer must be for us babes in grace! It is as if he said, ‘Keep me back, or I shall rush headlong over the precipice of sin.’ Our evil nature, like an ill-tempered horse, is apt to run away. May the grace of God put the bridle upon it and hold it in, that it rush not into mischief. What would the best of us do if it were not for the checks that the Lord sets upon us both in providence and in grace! The psalmist’s prayer is directed against the worst form of sin—that which is done with deliberation and willfulness. What! Do saints really need to be warned against such sins as these? Yes, they do. The whitest robes, unless their purity be preserved by divine grace, will be defiled by the blackest spots.”

Do you feel that? I think we’re really in danger if we don’t feel that war, that battle raging, that propensity that we have toward leaning away from God’s holy standards to behave in ways that don’t adorn the Gospel. So Paul says to this young pastor, remind them. How often do I need to remind them? Remind them over and over and over. Why? Because we need it. Remind them of what? Here, Paul gives seven specific behaviors that Titus is to remind them of over and over again.

How are we going to use this list? We’ll go through them rather quickly, but how do we use this list? I’m going to encourage you to bring each of these before the Lord this week, asking Him to convict you of areas where there is failure and then in hope, to ask Him to train you by His grace that you would adorn the Gospel in the areas that the Spirit brings conviction. Here are seven behaviors. The redeemed behave by

**1. Submitting to authorities.**

Why did the list have to begin with this?

***1*** *Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities,*

The term “be submissive” means that we possess a voluntary attitude of cooperation. It means that we maintain a willingness to follow directions and obey laws. It means that we cultivate a respect for those in positions of authority. It means that we refuse to think, speak or act in ways that dishonor the office that our governing authorities hold. We know that God Himself has placed them there. It does not mean that we never point out sins or wrongs done by a governing authority. But when we do, we do it with honor and respect, notwith a heart of disdain or contempt. Our adorning of the Gospel leads believers to be the best of citizens in this present world.

To be submissive to rulers means that we refuse to speak of them with disdain or dishonor. To be submissive to rulers means that we obey the laws. I realize, just as an aside, that there are legitimate reasons for disobedience. God says if governing authorities command you to do that which God forbids or governing authorities command you not to do that which God commands, in those positions, God is the ultimate authority. But as a whole, and we’re just going to look at this generally, believers have a bent toward submission, not away from it.

To be submissive to rulers means that we are a people who pray for our authorities. From the early days of the church, God’s people in the very early centuries, when the ruling authorities in Rome were very unfavorable to this new religion, this new sect, the early church leaders constantly gave this appeal to pray. They did pray and they told the governing authorities, “We are a people who pray for you.” Over and over we see testimonies of this in the early church writings. He says to not only remind them to be submissive, which is a heart attitude, but in our actions, to be obedient.

**2. Obeying authorities.**

***1*** *Remind them…to be obedient,*

The first behavior attends to the heart of submission. The second is eagerness to follow through with our hands, with our actions, through obedience.In this day of present day political strife, we believers need to be reminded of these basic behaviors that adorn the Gospel related to governing authorities. It’s fascinating! I’ll read just two passages for you. In 1 Peter 2, Peter says

**1 Peter 2:13-15** Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God,

Then in Romans chapter 13, Paul says

**Romans 13:1** Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

It’s fascinating that this behavior of submitting to and obeying civil authority is so strongly emphasized in the 1st Century in the sacred text of the New Testament. Why is it so fascinating? I find it fascinating because the Gospel story hinges on events where human authority acted in such an evil way. We think of the religious spiritual authorities. What did they do? They accused Jesus falsely. They bribed witnesses to speak falsehood. Then they arrested Jesus. This is the religious authority. Then what did the secular governing authority do? They took Jesus and they arrested Him. They put a crown of thorns upon Him. They whipped Him with a cat of nine tails to be nearly unrecognizable. Then they nailed Him to a cross. It’s shocking isn’t it? These people, in writing about how Christians behave, they lean in over and over again in the New Testament by saying to be submissive to ruling authorities. You would think they would be people who would say, “Ruling authority did evil. Religious authority and secular authority are just an evil bunch. Just reject them all.” But no, these are people who say this is the perspective that a Christ-follower has, even in the earliest of the times.

**3. Being ready to help**

***1*** *Remind them…to be ready for every good work,*

I love that! It just simply means to consciously arrange our lives so that we have availability to help others when the opportunities arise. We don’t take ourselves out of the helping game by filling up our schedules so tightly that we have no opportunity. I think we all would want to think that we are going to be the Good Samaritan. Whatever the Good Samaritan story is, we think, “I’m the guy who stops. The other bozos are the ones who pass by.” It is true that very few of us ever are confronted with a person who is bleeding and nearly at death’s door and walk past them. I don’t know very many people who have ever actually done that. But we’ve had many, many times, and this is a confession for myself, where there were needs in front of me and my schedule was too jammed and I felt that I had to walk by. It’s that neighbor who needs a hand to move heavy furniture. It’s that sick member of the congregation who needs a meal. Again, it’s so easy to say somebody else is going to do that. What he says is the behavior of believers, especially I think this is in reference to good works among unbelievers, even though Galatians 6 says

**Galatians 6:10** So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

It’s our busyness, I’ll say our self-centered busyness that tempts us to close our eyes and walk on by opportunities that God opens for us to bring hope and help and goodness. Remind them to be ready for every good work that God may set in front of you.

**4. Refusing damaging words.**

***2*** *Remind them to…to speak evil of no one,*

Simply refuse to engage with damaging words. You might underline that little word “no one.” Speak evil of no one. If you put up all the people that you know in your life that you’re tempted to speak evil of because they’ve hurt you, they’ve wronged you, they’ve done something pretty despicable. Make a list of those people who you are tempted. How many of those people do not fall under the category presented of “no one”? We might think there is maybe an exception. “I can speak evil of this person because this person is a really evil person. I can speak evil of them.” No, it says speak evil of no one. Every person that you know is under this category. Speak evil of no one. In other words, we are a people who have been favored by God and who deserve to be condemned. We have done wicked to God and yet God speaks love over us. He speaks acceptance over us. We’re then a people who are able to avoid speaking evil of anyone, to reflect what Christ has done in us.

Our words are so powerful for good or for evil. To speak evil means to use our words to diminish or to damage or to treat with contempt, to belittle, to malign. Human anger and bitterness causes the person who speaks evil against a person to believe that they are actually righteous in doing it. How deceitful is our heart! We speak evil and we actually think we’re doing something good. How evil is our heart! Paul says, “Titus, remind them of the Gospel.” This by the way is not just to speak evil, but also to post anything evil of no one. That’s a big category, isn’t it? The Psalmist David said

**Psalm 19:4** Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

We need Him to give strength for this. It’s by grace that trains us toward this kind of speech that blesses and doesn’t curse.

**5. Avoiding quarrels.**

***2*** *Remind them…to avoid quarreling,*

God’s people have been given peace with God through Jesus Christ. Amen? (Amen!) Because of that, our lives can be filled with shalom. We can carry the peace of God with us wherever we go, into every situation. When we come to a fire of conflict, we are a people who are enabled by God’s grace to pour the water of grace on that conflict rather than bring the gas, the oil of human animosity. If our participation in a conversation causes more strife and incites anger among those who are present, we have failed in our spiritual worship.

Have you ever walked away from a conversation and thought, “That wasn’t good.” I have. I realize I just got into a quarrel. In my mind, I’ve never been conscious in recent years of walking into a conversation and thinking, “I’m going to quarrel. That’s my intention. (Laughter!) I’m going to bring it!” But often, I have suddenly been part of something where I realize I step back and think how did that happen? I get carried away. My emotions get engaged. That’s why he says to remind them to avoid quarreling. We have to steer around it if we’re to avoid it.

We all have opinions about many matters. We’re right to believe that we are right about our opinions, or else we should change our opinions. (Laughter!) But we are wrong to allow our rightness to lead us into quarrels. We are wrong to allow our rightness to be unchecked, unquestioned, as though our opinions are from God Himself. This is true whether we are face to face with an individual or whether we are online. Avoid quarrels.

Should we avoid talking about matters where we disagree? No, I don’t think that’s what Paul is saying to Titus. But we are to be peaceable about it. If suddenly we’re in what we hope to be a productive conversation and we realize it’s getting emotionally charged, we’re right to gently and humbly back away and say, “I think it’s turning into a quarrel and I want to avoid this because I don’t want to do any harm.”

**6. Being gentle.**

***2*** *Remind them…. to be gentle,*

We are to be reasonable with our words and our actions; not harsh or severe. We are to overlook transgressions that we suffer and not strike back when we are attacked or injured.

When I think of being gentle, I think of my little twenty-one month old granddaughter, Aleksi. When she is with a little baby, she’s so tender. She walks up and she kind of puts her arm on them very lightly. She is so gentle. She knows this little one is more fragile than she is and she wants to be really careful and really gentle. I look at that and I say that’s the way I want to be. I want to be that in every circumstance. Remind them to be gentle.

**7. Showing courtesy.**

***2*** *Remind them…to show perfect courtesy toward all people.*

Courtesy means we’re looking to the interests of others. We’re seeking their good. We’re acting in ways that makes others feel loved and respected. We’re not so self-absorbed that we fail to see the room. Show perfect courtesy. When we enter into the room, we’re not just thinking about how are other people responding to me? We’re thinking about what are other people experiencing here? There are all kinds of things that are happening. If I have eyes to see, I want to act in a way with courtesy that reflects a sensitivity, reflects a desire for that person to be encouraged.

Why do we behave in alignment with these seven ideas? Because we care about God’s honor. It’s because worship matters to us. Remember Jesus in Matthew 5 says

**Matthew 5:16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

It is the behavior of believers that becomes a testimony that adorns the Gospel. One day, we will be perfected. Isn’t it a blessed hope? It’s called a blessed hope. We not only will not sin, but we won’t even be tempted to sin. It’s hard to even imagine what that’s going to be like, to live an experience where I’m not even tempted to sin. There are no more failings. That day will be a day of completion and we wait for it happily and with great expectation. We’re right to think about that day and long for it. But right now, this is not the day of completion. This is the day of growth. This is the day of process, and it’s a battle. It’s hard and we need to be reminded. We need to keep Jesus in front of us.

I ask you, are you growing in grace for the glory of God? How do I know if I’m growing in grace? Don’t trust your feelings. A lot of people feel like they’re growing in grace when they’re not. Don’t trust your feelings. Look at these objective matters. These seven are great objective matters that we can place our soul right up against the wall.

A week ago, I was over at my son and daughter-in-law’s house and my son had the chart, the little growth chart. He hadn’t had his kids stand up against the growth chart for about four or five months. “Aleksi, you grew an inch. Malakai, you grew an inch and a half.” Then they mark it and put the date. Why do parents do that? If you’ve had children, you’ve probably done that. Why do parents do that? First of all, we love to see progress. That excites us! Secondly, if there is no progress, I better go talk to the pediatrician. Because a healthy child, within six months, is going to grow and it’s an objective standard. We need an objective standard because we might think they’ve grown, but subjectively, we don’t see our children grow. Objectively, we can see that they’ve actually grown an inch or an inch and a half.

How do we measure the growth of our soul? God gives us a little chart right here. He gives seven things that we can use to measure, how am I doing here on this? If we haven’t grown, we say, “I need to see the Physician.” I need to see Jesus because something is not right in my soul. If it has taken six months and I’m not growing in any of these criteria, and if I’ve actually shrunk, I really need to see the Physician. If I’m less gentle, less courteous, more quarreling than I was last year, something is really, really wrong. I need to see the Physician who by His grace, promises me health and life and strength. God’s grace trains us to behave like Jesus in all our relationships.

Let me ask you once again, have you been born of God? New life is offered to every one of us by God’s grace, through faith.