

## An Outline of Titus Chapter 3



## Introduction

Paul's teaching in Titus and the third chapter is set against the secular background of Roman rule over Crete and the tendency of the native Cretians to resist Roman authority. The Epistle begins with a severe indictment against the Cretians. "One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, the Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies" (Tit 1:12). Spiritually, the Epistle anticipates the "latter days" – the time of departure at the end of the apostolic era, and so it shares and contributes to a common theme of the Pastoral Epistles – keeping *the faith*. A worthwhile examination of this chapter will have these matters in mind. Further, though outside our present concern, it is helpful to study these three Pastoral Epistles according to their *chronological* order of writing – First Timothy, Titus and then Second Timothy. This gives us fresh appreciation of the pattern of divine *inspiration* and the pattern of divine *revelation*, of the pattern of things that *were* and that *will* be. We will also gain a greater understanding of how things *should* be in regard to our spiritual lives – individually and collectively.

In First Timothy Paul teaches us how the "man of God" should walk in regard to the local church, "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15). And so we have instruction regarding the government of the local church and the behavior of the man of God within it. These same truths are presented within the first two chapters of Titus. It is again the man of God in relation to the local church and his behavior as a believer in fellowship with its corporate testimony. In chapter 3 Paul broadens the sphere of spiritual responsibility of the man of God. He exhorts him to good behavior as he walks within Christendom and the world. He enlarges upon this in the Second Epistle to Timothy. It is in Titus therefore that we are presented with three things that the man of God must bear in mind in regard to the wider calling to good conduct – his *privilege*, *position* and *possession*. It is not an unfamiliar prescription where practical matters are concerned, as we note later.

## Chapter Outline

The following headings are a suggested outline to the key matters raised by Paul in this third chapter of Titus.

- Verses 1-2: The **CALL** to good conduct
- Verse 3: The **CONTRAST** between good and bad conduct
- Verses 4-7: The **CAUSE** of good conduct
- Verses 8-14: The **CHALLENGES** in the light of it
- Verse 15: The **CLOSING** benediction

## The call to good conduct

There are three things to note here. First, the *subjects* – the people Paul exhorts to good conduct; second, the *subject* – the practical matter of good civil conduct and third, the *sphere* of responsibility in regard to good conduct. Paul addresses his message to every believer in Crete regardless of their

role within the local church, and irrespective of age, gender or ethnic group. It is a universal message to be put to “them” (all) (v 1). The subject concerns their Christian lives before all men, which must exhibit “every good work” (good conduct, v 1). The basis of this good conduct is in the first instance a matter of subjection to *all* secular authority – to *principalities, powers* and *magistrates*. Paul leaves no room for expedient exceptions, which the Cretans may well have been inclined to look for and act upon. Civil responsibility and the *reason* for it are placed before the believers living under the immediate and repressive iron hand of Rome. “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom 13:1). Peter, writing to believers who are seen as pilgrims in the wilderness, also speaks of civil submission; and he provides the *motive* for it. “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme” (1 Pet 2:13). The man of God is not to be known as one who is given to civil insurrection or rebellion. God hates rebellion and likens it to the sin of witchcraft (1 Sam 15:23).

This subjection – if it is genuine, will be marked by a “readiness to do every good work;” the absence of speaking evil about any man; the absence of brawling and an attitude of gentleness and meekness to all men (v 2). In the language and sentiment of Paul’s Second Epistle to Timothy – we are to be vessels “unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim 2:20). We note next the sphere of individual responsibility. In its negative aspect it is “to no man” and in its positive aspect it is “unto all men,” bringing out the clear responsibility of the man of God in relation to the professing church and to the world at large.

### Are there exceptions?

Nothing less than absolute subjection to secular authority is prescribed in this passage. In the light of the endemic evil and the abominable practices sanctioned by civil legislators of today, how far do we take our subjection to secular authority? It is a question that invariably rises in regard to such insistence.

This is a prime instance where we are called upon to consider the “whole counsel of God” by comparing Scripture with itself. The Lord gives us the binding precedent when He was asked to rule on the legality of paying tribute money to Rome. There was widespread resentment and rebellion among the Jews over this tax. The Pharisees sought to entrap and embroil the Lord in this popular civil indignation. “Tell us therefore, what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto Him a penny. And he saith unto them, whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith He unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's” (Matt 22:17–21). Clearly, there are things that belong to God – those things that relate to His glory and honour which are not negotiable. We have a demonstration of the Lord’s precedent in Acts 5. The disciples were imprisoned for preaching in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Yet, upon their release they continued to do so. “Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? And, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us” (Acts 5:28). The disciples

stood firm and directed their accusers to a Higher Authority. “We ought to obey God rather than men” (v 29). The Word of God is replete with instructive examples – Daniel for instance, who refused to eat the king’s meat or to bow before the golden image in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon under a “bitter and hasty nation.”

There is a related and exemplary illustration of the required civil conduct of the man of God when the Lord was arraigned before Pilate. It moved no doubt the exhortation by Paul “to speak evil of no man” (v 2). The word “evil” is “blasphemy” (*blasphemeo*), which usually means to rail against a person.<sup>1</sup> A finer rendering of it means to utter a falsehood with the intention of causing injury. We have an instance of it where the Jewish authorities attributed the Lord’s miracles which He did through the Holy Spirit to Beelzebub – the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost. Their accusation was false and designed to impugn the integrity of Christ. Now Pilate was by all estimation an evil man, who on this occasion challenged the Lord’s silence while weighing up evil according to personal and political expediency. “Then saith Pilate unto Him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin” (Jn 19:10-11). Mark how the Lord conducts Himself in His reply, “thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.” He was not contentious – but He *contended* for righteousness and truth; He was gentle but not *covered* in that He identified unrighteousness; He was meek yet *commanding* when He presented the truth in righteousness.

It is important to note that when Paul exhorts us not to speak evil of any person and to be no brawlers, but gentle and meek towards all men, that he is not intending that the man of God shrinks from “telling it as it is.” The Lord’s reply above is ample instruction and authority for it. Today, more than ever, we are under civil authorities who devise mischief upon their beds; who set themselves in a way that is not good and abhor no evil” (Ps 36:4). Their policies mark them as evil in the sight of the Lord, “for of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Lk 6:45). If we follow the Lord’s example above, our first response will be according to *righteousness* which serves to *reprove* the evil. And here, it is important to note that before we can properly reprove evil we must be first well read in “the truth,” even as light reproves darkness! In a coming radiant dawn, righteousness will exalt every nation under the King of kings and Lord of lords. Second, righteous reproof must be executed in *goodness* in order to encourage and leave room for a *repentance* of evil. No doubt the Lord’s reply did this very thing, because we read that “he [Pilate] found no fault in Him.” Sadly, Pilate was a man who had hardened his heart, and so he never fully availed himself of the opportunity that was afforded by the Lord’s reply. We have a complementary practical exhortation by Paul to the Ephesians. “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the

---

<sup>1</sup>It is different to *poneros* which means to be morally corrupt or “degeneracy from original virtue.”

Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (Eph 5:8-9). The mandate for the man of God as a “living sacrifice” is to “abhor that which is evil” and to “cleave to that which is good” (Rom 12:9).

## The contrast in conduct

Having dealt with the call to good conduct Paul now profiles the stark contrast between the conduct which characterized the old creation, and the conduct that is consistent with the believer as a new creation in Christ.<sup>2</sup> These verses open the wider subject of the distinction between the standing and state of the old man in Adam and the new man in Christ. The contrast serves to bring “good works” into relief and identify the moral character from which they spring. The following table presents the contrast.

The Old Creation marked by:	The New Creation marked by:
Foolishness	Wisdom unto salvation
Disobedience towards God	Obedience towards God
Deception according to error	Knowledge according to truth
Serving pleasure	Service to God
Maliciousness	Goodwill – gentleness, meekness
Hatred	Love

We have Paul presenting a similar contrast in chapter 6 of his first letter to the Corinthians. “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11). In the light of our outline of the cause of the change in conduct below, we are careful to note here the moral and judicial standing of the believer as a person who has been “washed and sanctified” as well as “justified.”<sup>3</sup>

## The cause of the contrast in conduct

The change in our conduct is not brought about by attending seminars to generate “good behavior” – behavior which is constructed by the altruism of social engineers according to the blueprint of the prevailing social conscience. Neither is it obtained by finding our “inner selves” by reading the latest theologian’s psychological commentary on the Bible or through mind-bending spiritual meditation. May we be preserved from attending the so called “spiritual retreat” – which is a pastime more to do with the “spirit of the age” than with the revealed mind and working of the Spirit of God. Our change in conduct is enabled and encouraged solely by *salvation* in Christ – the salvation that appeared to man “through the kindness and love of God” (v 4) – God’s pity for man under sin and His love for man in spite of it.

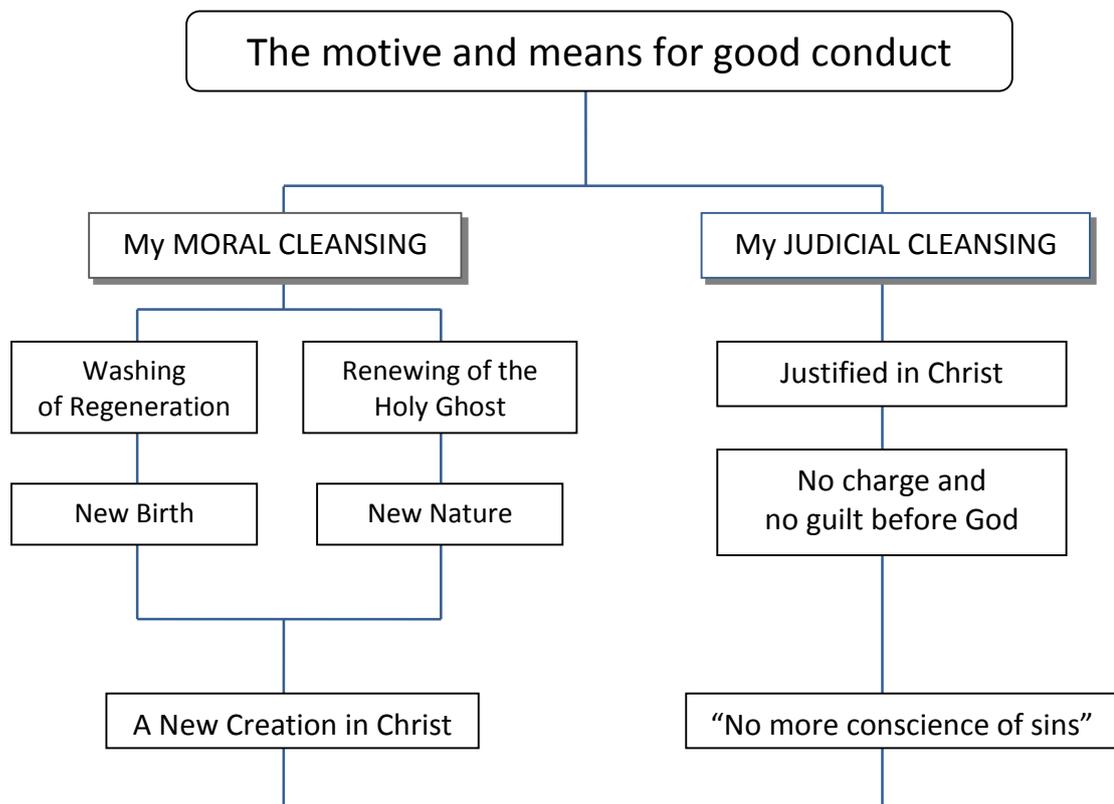
In verses 5 to 7 we have the biblical basis for the *means* and  *motive* for good conduct. It is found in the  *moral* and  *judicial* standing that we have before God through salvation in Christ. “Not by works

---

<sup>2</sup> J W de Silva, “The Old and the New Man” [www.ribbonofblue.net/Articles/](http://www.ribbonofblue.net/Articles/)

<sup>3</sup> The “washing” does not refer to baptism.

of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” As a new creation in Christ I stand before God morally cleansed. I am also judicially free from all condemnation. Consequently, it is incumbent upon me to live in accordance with my new standing and liberty from sin. It was “the washing of regeneration” – the application of the Word of God to my heart by the convicting work of the Holy Spirit that cleansed me *morally* at conversion. “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (Jn 3:5). “He that is washed [bathed] needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit” (Jn 13:10). It is upon conversion that I received the “renewing of the Holy Spirit” – the new nature. It was on the ground of the *shed blood* of Christ that I was cleansed *judicially* at conversion. I thus stand before God in Christ without charge now and forever. The following diagram outlines these truths.



Our perfect moral standing in Christ through the love of God and the freedom from sin that we have through justification, are brought before us as the motive for good works. This is not an isolated principle which has its vigor in the distinction between the old and the new man. We noted it above in Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthians, presented in a manner suited to carnal believers. They had to be reminded that they were washed, sanctified and justified “in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11). We have it again in Ephesians, there in a way suited to a people seen raised and seated together in Christ. Paul presents seven aspects of the practical walk of the believer

in the first part of this epistle. Before he does so, he is careful to recall the believer's privilege, position and possession in Christ: that we are *chosen* "in Him before the foundation of the world; that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (v 4); that "we have *redemption* through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (v 7); that we are "*sealed* with that Holy Spirit of promise" (v 14). Then, in Romans 7 we have it in relation to the wretched man and the conflict between the two natures.<sup>4</sup>

## The love of God to all men

A specific comment on verse 4 is warranted in the light of a persistent and pernicious doctrinal error found within the professing church. In chapter 2 Paul declared the blessed and universal truth that "the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." In chapter 3 he declares the same saving truth, but it is now circumscribed by the divine attribute of kindness and love. "After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared." The word "love" in this instance is perhaps not what we may at first suppose – "agape" or sacrificial love as we have it in John 3:16. It is *philanthropia*, which refers to the caring and gracious disposition of God toward mankind. We get the English word "philanthropy" from it – doing things that benefit our fellow man. God's love is both philanthropic and sacrificial. The former speaks of God's *desire* to bless all men; the latter speaks of the *depth* to which He was prepared to go to do it – the giving of His only Begotten Son to die at Calvary. His philanthropic and sacrificial love must be regarded as inextricably entwined. They are a part of God's attributes. This means one cannot be greater or lesser than the other and that they operate in perfect harmony, owning and serving the same divine object, which is to provide salvation for fallen man.

### *The error*

However, there are those who would tell us that God's sacrificial love is not for everyone. In His eternal counsels He determined that only a limited number of people would benefit from it. His philanthropic love was for all men but His sacrificial love was designed only to benefit a few. It means that Christ's sacrifice and shed blood upon the cross was not *for* all men. It was reserved for an elect number chosen by God according to His sovereignty. This we know as the narrow and tragic doctrine of limited atonement which is derived from the one-sided creed that is Calvinism (whatever the degree). The largeness of God's grace, mercy and love is clearly revealed in Scripture. Every enquiring and anxious soul that comes to it with the simplicity of faith will readily perceive it and be eternally blessed by it. Calvinism and limited atonement in particular, are prime examples where men have turned their back on the revealed light of Scripture. In so doing they dwell in the impotent shadows of their own intellect where human "logic" stumbles their appreciation of the indefinable blessedness of the love of God.

---

<sup>4</sup> J W de Silva: "A comment on Romans chapter 7." [www.ribbonofblue.net/Articles/](http://www.ribbonofblue.net/Articles/)  
An Outline of Titus 3 J W de Silva 2010

“Love that no tongue can teach”  
“Love that no thought can reach”  
“No love like His....Matchless it is” (Thomas Kelly)

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9). What does this teach us, except that God’s desire is that *all* men *avail* themselves of His *sacrificial love* by repenting? If I am saved, it means that I have come under the sacrificial love of God. And so when we read that God “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,” we have God’s Word declaring that His sacrificial love was designed for all men (1 Tim 2:4). How consistent is all this with the clear truth of John 3:16. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Calvinism and all the creeds of men owe their origin to those who have failed to heed the words of this epistle. “Avoid foolish questions.” It was said to the writer recently – by a fellow believer, that it is uncharitable for a Christian to challenge the various doctrines that are found within the professing church. Well then, in the cause of sensibility, are we to set aside the clear and solemn responsibility enjoined upon the man of God – “to prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess 5:21); “to preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim 4:2)? Such ostensibly magnanimous assertions are sadly mistaken and manifest the lukewarm Laodicean spirit of the age.

On further remark before continuing. The idea of limited atonement shifts the motivation for our good conduct away from Christ and His sacrificial work for us, and places it on the elitist principle that we were elected in preference to the eternal detriment of the predestined reprobate.<sup>5</sup>

## The challenges in the light of the cause of good conduct

Having presented the basis and cause of good conduct Paul now identifies the challenges that can arise in the pursuit of it, so that “they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works” (v 8). This involves avoiding that which is unprofitable.

- *Foolish questions*: questions that are vain and flatter the flesh. They lead to “strife” – subverting faith through debate which breeds doubt. “But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes” (2 Tim 2:23). We can identify three spheres of foolish enquiry.
  - Debating divine things that *defy* the laws of nature, such as the fig tree that withered when it was cursed by the Lord.
  - Debating divine things that *go beyond* the laws of nature, for instance where the disciples failed to understand the Lord’s teaching concerning His death and resurrection on the third day (Mk 9:31).

---

<sup>5</sup> J W de Silva “Calvinism – Bitter for Sweet” <http://www.ribbonofblue.net/Articles> or John Ritchie Christian Publishing 2014.

- Debating (and so doubting) divine revelation because it seems to be contradictory – such as God’s sovereignty existing alongside man’s responsibility, giving rise to wrongful doctrine such as limited atonement noted above.
- *Genealogies*: the recording and preoccupation with genealogies in order to glory in one’s natural heritage. The only important heritage is spiritual – in Adam or in Christ.
- *Contentions, and strivings about the law*: Debates about the law – its relevance and how it is to be kept. Paul sums it up in Romans 10. “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth” (Rom 10:1-4).
- *Rejecting a heretic*: reject him after the first and second admonition, “knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.” The action demanded is against the *person* because of the schism he *has* created through dissent and disorder. He cannot be a heretic unless his actions have born fruit. The command is to reject *him* – if his manner persists, after grace has administered a first and second admonition. This may in some instances involve excommunication. To reject means to avoid or to shun the person – to have nothing to do with *him*. It would be impossible to comply fully with the force of the rejection if he were within the assembly and sharing in the collective testimony with the saints. It may also be that that this man has left the local church and has gathered others unto himself; in which case he and his consorts have to all intent rejected the church. The context and grammar necessitates that other believers are involved. The heretic is probably a charismatic character who has drawn people away by favoring an aspect of doctrine or persisting in a matter of dissent – hence the word “heretic” which means “sectarian,” to divide, such as we see in the “sect of the Sadducees” (Acts 5:17). It is a grave thing to observe that sectarianism is considered subversive and sinful.

## The closing benediction

Paul closes with a brief salutation and a request to greet all in “the faith.” The definite article is in keeping with the focus of the Pastoral Epistles on the body of Christian doctrine, which is to be preserved and proclaimed.

In our opening remarks we noted that the man of God is to bear in mind his *privilege, position and possession* in Christ. An acknowledgment and a growing appreciation of these blessings provide the needed direction and motive in service unto good works. This principle was noted along the way and now we mention it in closing. Paul begins his letter to Titus with a declaration of the *privilege* of the man of God – he is one of God’s elect. “Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness” (v 1). In the third chapter, as we have observed we have the *position* of the man of God which was obtained at

conversion through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit (vv 5-6). Then, in conclusion we are given the blessed *possession* of the man of God. “That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

