

Titus 3:1-3

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Preacher: Nathan Rambeck

[0 : 0 0] Is everybody ready for 2023? I don't know if I am either. We'll see. But ready or not, right? Here it is.

Well, a few more announcements before we jump back into the Scriptures. We're going to continue on with the book of Titus. But one, we've had some prayer requests go out.

Continue to keep Bruce, McConkie, and Marie and their whole family in your prayers. They're going through a difficult time right now with his lung issues, and they're finding cancer there.

So we pray for the best, and we know that regardless, God holds us in his hands, right? And we're so grateful for that. But we definitely want to uphold them in our prayers and send cards and let them know that you're thinking about them and loving on them.

That's part of the work of the body of Christ. We rejoice with those who rejoice. We grieve and we sorrow with those who are suffering, and so we want to play our role in that way.

[1 : 1 0] The same with Carolyn Jordan. She's going through a similar thing. What was the other announcement? We do have...

We kind of are past the deadline for renewal of church membership, but you'll notice that it's still in the bulletin. So our deadline is a little fuzzy.

So if you want to renew, make sure you get that in. I think we do make phone calls just to check up on people, see if they forgot. But if you still haven't done that and want to do that, also keep in mind that that same sheet, even if you're not renewing your membership but you'd like to be in the church directory, go ahead and fill that out.

I think there's a checkbox on there to indicate that you just want to be in the church directory, and you can give us your information, and we'd love that. Also, there is a form for the... What's it called? The Women's Service Committee.

And if that's something that you're interested in volunteering in that way. I had some... There were some questions over the last couple of weeks about, well, what kinds of things are there, and I think there's some lists on the sheet.

[2 : 1 4] But if you have any additional questions, is Marsha Freese the right person to talk to about that? And I don't think the Freeses are here today, but I bet you Joyce would be able to answer most questions.

She just gave me... Is that an eye roll? She knows everything. She does.

I got an amen for that one. Let's see. Oh, well, I guess a couple other things. I had mentioned a few weeks ago that in the future, I'd like to do just a Q&A; service, just questions and answers, not necessarily hit on any specific topic or specific scriptures, but just answer questions that you all might have.

And that could be questions that are from the audience or the congregation that day. But what I'd like to do is see if you have any questions that you'd like to just submit on paper.

And I think at some point somebody put some little note cards in all the chairs. So if you want to... If you have any questions, things that are burning on your heart or mind concerning the scriptures, things that we've talked about, things that you just read in the Bible and are not sure about, or just things that you think would be good to discuss.

[3 : 39] I had someone talk to me earlier this morning about that. If you would write on that piece of paper and just stick it in the offering box, and then that'll go into my inbox. And once we get kind of a certain amount, we'll see what that is.

Then we'll go ahead and schedule a service where we'll do that. And I think it'll be a fun time. Okay, and lastly, I wanted to try to... We bought a bunch of books, mostly creation, like apologetics type stuff that we put out on the book table.

By the way, we kind of moved some things around if you noticed. The book table's in a little bit of a different spot. But we're just kind of experimenting with different locations and ways to organize things.

But I wasn't sure what to pitch today. But one of the things that we just got out here is something that I wrote, actually.

And Abby helped me kind of print this out into a little booklet form. But it's just called the gospel. What is the gospel? And, you know, a lot of people... The word gospel is used actually a lot in our culture, isn't it?

[4 : 47] If you talk about, you know, oh, well, that's gospel or something like that. That means it's like a definitive authority on something.

But not a lot of people really understand what the gospel is. It's the good news. It's the message, the primary message of the Bible. But for a lot of people, they think the gospel is living a good life, right?

Trying to do your best in life. Maybe following Jesus in some kind of way. What does that mean? What does it mean to follow Jesus? Jesus said, follow me. We should follow him.

What does that mean? And so I just wrote this. I probably wrote this five or six years ago as something that I could hand out to people, you know, on witnessing encounters that I could have available.

And I thought I'd print this out and make this available at our church. It's something you can read probably in about ten minutes. So it's not too long. But it just explains what is the message, this gospel message, this good news message that is in the Bible.

[5 : 55] And it's from a grace perspective, which is really important to us here. A lot of times the gospel message, you know, the gospel really is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus died for our sins. That's the gospel. He died for our sins so that we could live with him, so we could be righteous, so that we could be forgiven, that we could have eternal life.

But some people kind of add things to it. And so this is a message about that gospel, but specifically how you receive it.

By faith alone, without any works. So if you're interested in that, there's, I don't know, maybe ten copies out there. Feel free to take one.

If you have somebody in mind that might benefit from reading about what is this gospel in the Bible, feel free to pass that out. Okay.

[6 : 52] I think that's it. So everybody ready to jump back into Titus? We're in chapter three. Titus is a more practical book.

It is a lot of instruction about how to live as a Christian, whether it's a Christian leader or just somebody who's just a normal Christian, living the Christian life, and how we ought to live as Christians.

But as we saw, I think it was two weeks ago now, there's also interjected in there, what is this gospel, and specifically this gospel of grace? But we finally made it to the end of chapter two, and now we are in verse three.

And in this last part of Titus, the part we're going to focus on today is really how, as Christians, are we to live in the world?

So, you know, one day, we who are believers will live in a place where there is no sin, there is no rebellion against God.

[8 : 13] We'll all be living together as Christians or as believers, as those who love the Lord, and we won't have to deal with worldly things.

We won't have to deal with corruption in the government. We won't have to live with people who want to steal and rob from us. We won't have to live and deal with people who despise and hate us.

One day. One day that will come. And that we will all be with the Lord, and everyone with the Lord will love Him. And we'll love one another.

But that's not the world we live in right now. And so I think this first section here of Titus is really about how we as Christians ought to live in the world that we are in right now.

So he says this, Remind them, so he's talking to Titus, to the congregations there in Crete. Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities.

[9 : 20] To obey. To be ready for every good work. To speak evil of no one. To be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.

For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we had done, but according to His mercy, He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

Whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace, we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

And I think that's what we'll cover today. He's talking about how we interact with the authorities in our lives, the government, and then also with those around us, how we should interact or live with people who are not believers, those who are living an ungodly lifestyle.

[10 : 39] And he mentions how we used to walk. Those who, you know, it's been said, you know, you're not, and some people believe this, but you are not born a Christian.

You are not born a believer. You are not born a child of God. Now, we are all children of God in a general sense, in a certain sense. But in the most important sense, we must become children of God.

And we have an important idea that we make sure is circulated in our household, that God has no grandchildren. Anybody ever heard that? Yeah, God doesn't have any grandchildren, right?

Now, some of you have grandchildren, right? You had children, and then they had children. But when it comes to our relationship with God, it's not something that we are just born into, but we each have to decide to join the family of God for ourselves.

So each one of us are children of God, not just a child of God, just because our parents were or are. So how do we live in the world that we are in?

[11 : 55] He starts out, remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey them. This is kind of a tough saying.

How do we interact with, you know, Paul is saying this, and it's kind of just this short little thing. But we might ask Paul, Paul, don't you know who you're talking about?

These guys, these rulers and authorities? Yeah, and back then, Paul lived under what? The Roman Empire. And so he was talking about emperors, right?

You had the emperor. And then you have consuls and magistrates. You have soldiers that you have to deal with, people that you're interacting with, generals, centurions.

And you also have tax collectors, right? Because those were, I think, usually like contractors that worked for the government. They had governmental authority to collect taxes.

[13 : 04] And tax collectors, unlike today, tax collectors back then had a pretty good reputation, right? People really love tax collectors. No, I don't think there's been any time in history where anybody had a favorable opinion of a tax collector.

So that was back then. And today, it's a little bit different, right? We don't have an emperor. We don't have a king. We have a president.

We have governors over states. We have lawmakers at various different levels, federal and state. We have judges at various different levels. We have the Supreme Court, all the way down to our county court.

There's the Clark County judge, or judges, and where we live in Greene County, there's a courthouse there in Xenia. And then we have the police, which are the ones that we typically would interact with, probably the most frequently, that are part of the rulers and authorities.

So what does he mean by submitting to rulers and authorities? Do we just submit blindly?

[14 : 19] Well, I think in general, the idea is you should be a good citizen. You should be a law-abiding citizen. Not someone who is constantly contrary.

You know, some people, you might get the idea, well, we are believers now. We are under, in God's kingdom, right? God's kingdom. And so we don't really need to be under some other earthly kingdom.

And that's just not true. In fact, there was a saying back during the time of the War for Independence that people said, and I'm not sure how common it was, but people would, there was a saying, because people didn't like King, was it George?

Okay, thanks. My history is a little, I don't always get everything right. King George, they didn't like King George. And a lot of people, they didn't like the idea of a king at all. So they said, no king, but Jesus.

Right? And that was their saying. So we're not going to have a king rule over us. Is that biblical? No, it's not. God has designed that we would have authorities as far as national authorities for a nation, those who uphold justice.

[15 : 36] So it's the job of those who rule nations to what? Uphold justice. In fact, in Romans, chapter 12, or 13, excuse me, it talks specifically about that.

God has, in fact, let's turn there. I actually didn't have this in my notes, but I think it's important to look at. Romans, chapter 13, says this, let every soul be subject to the governing authorities.

For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed from God. Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

Now, that's not saying some maybe think that that means that every person that comes to power has been specifically put there by God.

God chose them for that position of power. And I don't think that's what this is saying at all. This is saying that the authority that those people hold is from God, that God designed for nations to have rulers over them to uphold justice.

[16 : 47] And he says here later, what therefore. He says, verse 3, for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.

For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is God's minister or servant, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

So the job of the authority is to uphold justice, to be a fearful person, to use the sword. That's the tool of the rulers, of the authorities, to use the sword.

And what is the sword used for? It's used for punishment. Right? To punish evildoers, to make evildoers afraid to do evil.

And that is God's ordained way of upholding justice, is to make people afraid, to make the bad guys, to use the phrase, afraid to do what is wrong.

[17 : 53] So as believers, we need to honor that authority and submit to it. Now, do these authorities always do what God intended for them to do?

Yeah, okay, a few shaking of the heads. Is it, is it kind of uncommon for authorities to abuse their power?

Or is it fairly common? Very common. And is it, is it something that we just see in maybe those communist countries out there where authority is abused?

Or is it basically every country on the whole planet? It basically is, right? And I think if we look back in history, we can see these little tiny pockets where there was an amazing amount of justice and freedom and the upholding of, of, of, of, of authority in the right way.

But for the most part, and I think this is just part of the human condition, is that authority and that power tends to, tends to corrupt and people use it in ways that they ought not to.

[19 : 12] So the general idea here is, as Christians, we ought to be law-abiding citizens. We should obey laws, obey the laws, as long as they don't undermine fundamental morality.

That's the general idea. Obey laws as long as they don't undermine fundamental morality. Now, does that sometimes happen, where you have laws that, that do?

Absolutely. We just had, this whole thing with, was it the Dobbs decision, am I getting that right? Recently, that overturned this vile, wicked Supreme Court decision, Roe v. Wade.

and that got overturned. And, and after that, we had some, we had our election back in November and I, I know Michigan and several other states voted to legalize abortion violence in their different jurisdictions in their states.

And, those laws are evil, they're wrong. They undermine fundamental morality. And, they should be resisted. And, we'll get into providing a little bit of biblical support for that.

[20 : 34] You know, in, in this country, and I'm a little less familiar with other countries, though I, I have some experience. I've lived in several countries specifically as an adult in Vietnam and Cambodia and the Philippines and when I was a kid I lived in Germany and, have taken note of the difference on how things operate.

There is corruption everywhere but, I, I noticed in Vietnam and especially in Cambodia that the corruption was intense and very out in the open.

There's a lot of corruption in this country but it tends to be more painted over. it tends to be sometimes even legitimized but the corruption is still there.

But we have, we have a multitude of laws in this country. You might call them regulations that are just onerous to the extent that it seems to me that it is actually impossible to go through a single day without breaking some law.

There are so many rules and regulations around, has anybody ever here tried to pull a permit for making maybe some changes or additions to your house? Yeah, okay, here's some chuckles.

[22 : 01] It's, it's quite an owner's process, isn't it, to, to go through it and there's all these tiny little rules about how tall your countertops can be or, you know, your light fixtures have to be a certain way and all these things and it's impossible, it is impossible to know, one, and even to obey all the rules and regulations that are out there.

So, as Christians, we ought to have, even though it may be impossible in a lot of ways to try to obey all these different regulations and rules, we ought to still have a spirit of submission to the authorities.

Do the best we can. The other thing that we've had just in recent years where it's become even pronounced with this whole COVID thing and what have we seen?

Where an emergency arises and people use that emergency to what? To take power, to take people's rights and their freedoms away, to abuse that power.

Where we have these mandated vaccines, these experimental vaccines that, where people are mandated in the military, if you join the military, if you're in the military, you're required to get an experimental vaccine.

[23 : 30] I know a young man, he had to leave, he wouldn't do it. And that's wrong. It's, it shouldn't be done. We had these lockdowns for a long time.

What was the original kind of phrase? 15 days or something like that? To stop the spread. 15 days to stop the spread and it turned into what, two and a half years of just all kinds of oppressive measures where so many businesses have gone, had to shut their doors and close down.

And you'll see this throughout history. Whenever there's an emergency, I think there's a phrase among politicians, you know, you don't, never waste, what is it, never waste a crisis.

There you go. Never waste a crisis. And so, emergency situations tend to lead to corruption and abuse of power.

There are a few examples I think we can look to in the Bible where there are ways to address when power is abused, when the law is abused.

[24 : 40] In Acts chapter 16, actually, let's just go ahead and turn there. Did Paul get in trouble with the law ever?

He did, didn't he? So, and remember, this is who's writing this. Paul was constantly in trouble with the law, but he's the one saying to submit to the authorities.

Romans 16. And, Paul ended up getting arrested for basically causing a disturbance.

He was preaching the gospel. He was causing a disturbance and got falsely accused on certain things. But, let's see, verse, verse 35, let's start.

And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers saying, let these men go. So, the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul saying, the magistrates have sent to you to let you go. Now, therefore, depart and go in peace.

[25 : 43] Actually, let's, what had they done? They had beat them. I'm looking for the verse. Well, no, he says it right here.

Verse 37, but Paul said to them, they have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now, do they put us out secretly?

No, indeed, let them come themselves and get us out. And the officers told these words to the magistrates and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans.

And so, in this situation, Paul is, he's dealing with the authorities. these are magistrates, these are local authorities, and they were upset with what Paul was doing and they ended up beating him and his compatriots there and then throwing them into prison.

And Paul used this opportunity. He had some leverage. He had something that not everybody had. He had Roman citizenship. He was born a Roman citizen.

[26 : 52] Other people would buy Roman citizenship, but for whatever reason, he was born a Roman citizen. And so, he used that to appeal to the law.

And so, in most jurisdictions, including this country, the individuals are not the highest authority, but at least it's supposed to be the highest authority is what?

the law. And so, we have opportunities where there are good laws, and there are not always good laws, are there? There are some evil laws. But where there are good laws, we have the opportunity sometimes to appeal to those good laws.

And that's what Paul is doing here. He's saying, you guys, even though you have authority, you're abusing that authority, you're doing what is against the law. And notice, what was the response from the magistrates?

They were afraid because they superseded, they went out of the bounds of their authority. Also, Acts 25, we'll go to Acts 25, just a few chapters over.

[27 : 59] Verse 8. Verse 8. Verse 8. Verse 8. So, he again got in trouble this time in Jerusalem and was going through different, he had appeared before Felix, he was going in front of different authorities.

He says this in verse 8, neither against the law or the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all. So he's saying, listen, I haven't actually broken any laws.

You guys are making accusations, but I haven't done anything. And this fits in, right, with what Paul is saying we should, as much as it's possible, and we'll talk about when it's not possible, as much as it's possible, we should obey the authorities.

We should do, we should obey the laws. We should honor and submit to the authorities. But he's saying here, I haven't done anything. But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?

So Paul said, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. For if I am an offender or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying.

[29 : 32] But if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar. And with any good system of law and justice, there is an appeals system.

We actually have appeals courts and an appeals process in this nation. And that is appropriate. So Paul was appealing to a higher authority.

He had authorities that were abusing their power. They wanted to appease the Jews, even though Paul had done nothing wrong. So Paul appealed to a higher authority.

We can do the same thing in this country when we have injustices that we are dealing with. We can appeal to higher authorities.

In this country, what is that? Where does the appeals process go to? We have the courts where it kind of goes all the way up. And finally, it goes up to the Supreme Court, right?

[30 : 36] And we have varying laws. We have laws for the state of Ohio. We have federal laws. But ultimately, every law in this country has to abide by the supreme law.

What do we call that? The Constitution. And pretty much everybody in the government is happy and totally willing to make sure that everything they do abides by the Constitution, right?

No. So sometimes you have to fight, right? You have to fight and resist and say, hey, actually, here is the law and we need to make sure that we abide by that.

We actually have a benefit here that our Constitution, especially at the highest level, is fairly good, right? I mean, the way that we kind of organize things I think is maybe amoral.

It doesn't have any moral content to it necessarily. But we have something specifically called the Bill of Rights that has some very biblical moral statutes in it that afford us and really, you know, rights, where do rights come from?

[31 : 58] They come from the government, right? The government is the one who gives us the rights that we have. No. Our rights come from God. God is the one who created us and he's the one who, where all the authority lies as far as the rights that we have.

We are created in his image and likeness and because of that we have certain rights and our, not our constitution but our declaration actually points that out that our rights come from our creator.

But thankfully our constitution does recognize some of those rights correctly which is good and we can leverage that. Another principle we should obey the government unless the government requires us to disobey God.

And is there an example in the Bible where that happens? Turn to Acts chapter 4. This is kind of an interesting thing right for Paul to write about submitting to the authorities when he was constantly in trouble and then the other apostles were constantly in trouble.

And to be honest if you are an active fruitful Christian it's not uncommon to be in trouble with the law. Now we want to be in trouble with the law not because we are doing bad things but only if we're doing good things.

[33 : 43] Acts chapter 4 verse 15 But when they had commanded them to go outside of the council they conferred among themselves saying what shall we do to these men for indeed that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem and we cannot deny it.

So they had Peter and John had healed a lame man and then used that as an opportunity to preach Christ to those who were in the crowds.

But so that it spreads no further among the people let us severely threaten them that from now on they speak to no man in this name. So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

These were people in authority and they said listen we'll go ahead and let you go but don't talk about this dude anymore this guy Jesus just keep quiet about it and you know we'll all be happy.

Right? And you know you might think well man I don't want to be in trouble with the law so probably the best thing to do is just make everybody happy and we'll just keep quiet.

[34 : 57] Right? Maybe we can we'll just wait until somebody asks us you know why are you such a happy person? Oh it's because of Jesus. And so right that's probably a good enough compromise right?

They weren't willing to compromise. So what did they say? What did they say? But Peter and John answered and said to them whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God you judge for we cannot speak the things which we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

So they actually didn't just go away and say well we won't do that. They actually responded and say no we're not going to obey you. We have an obligation and a duty before God to obey him first.

So when God has a command we obey him first. And when it comes to other things we're willing to abide by the rules but when it comes to this what God has commanded of us we are not going to abide.

I had the experience of living as a missionary in a country in which it was illegal to be a missionary in that country. I was in Vietnam for about seven or eight months and actually had to get a visa.

[36 : 23] And when you get a visa in many countries they want to know well why are you here? Are you just a tourist? You just want to come and check out the sites? Or are you here maybe to work? You get a work visa? Are you here to get an education?

You get an educational visa? And so if you get a tourist visa usually it's just for like two weeks or maybe up to a month just for a short time.

But if you want to stay longer you have to get a different kind of visa. So it's easy to get a tourist visa but it's harder to get some of the other ones. You have to show who you're going to work with or where you're going to go to school or whatever.

So I actually got a business visa so that I could stay there for longer. So I had to actually create a reason that I was there. I had a fake business and the whole thing.

I was in the process of being a missionary in Vietnam. I was undermining the laws and the authorities in Vietnam. It was because God has commanded us to preach the gospel and so we have authority from him and if it becomes necessary, and it's not always necessary, but if it becomes necessary, we can undermine those laws.

[37 : 38] The Christians who operated, the ones that we worked with in Vietnam there, they held their meetings, their church meetings, in secret, in homes. They didn't build church buildings because if they did, the authorities would know what they were doing and they would stop it.

So they would meet in secret and there were times when I would go and teach in a house church and there would be a knock at the door and they would say, all right, we've got to take you upstairs and go hide.

And there was one time where it was a good idea because it was the police knocking on the door. And thankfully, you know, in that specific occasion, it wasn't a big deal.

But we actually had one instance where, not me, but one of the guys who was with me, there were three of us together living there and working in Vietnam. He went out into the countryside, which was illegal.

Foreigners were not allowed. You had to stay in the city there in Vietnam. He went out into the countryside to meet with some pastors. And that meeting of pastors, which was in a house, there was probably a couple dozen pastors, got raided by the police.

[38 : 47] The police came. They raided and they found all their Christian materials and books and they confiscated them and they took everybody to the police station and grilled everybody and asked them questions and intimidated them.

And this is kind of the way that communism works. You know, communism and Christianity are at odds. They are competing interests. Communism says that we need to basically worship the state.

Christianity says, no, we need to worship God, our creator. And so those are in competition with one another. We kind of have some similar things going on in this country, right? People want us to worship the state.

God forbid that we would do so. And so my friend, his name is Quoc Muin, he's actually of Vietnamese descent. He actually got into some trouble because he didn't have his passport with him.

And hey, he looks like a native. And so they didn't believe him when he told them that he was an American. We had to go to the U.S. consulate and get him out. But we were undermining the laws of Vietnam.

[39 : 55] But these were evil laws, laws that shouldn't be. And sometimes that is appropriate for Christians, that we would undermine laws that undermine God's word and fundamental morality.

Well, let's continue on. Ready for every good work. So remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work. And then, again, back to authorities.

Even though I just told all those stories about undermining, having to undermine the government there in Vietnam, or we look at Paul undermining, or Peter and James and John and all the apostles undermining the things that they were commanded to do, yet at the same time, that doesn't mean that they just completely disregarded all of the laws there in Rome, or that we as Christians should undermine, or that me as a missionary in Vietnam should undermine all the laws in Vietnam.

God forbid that we would do so. Right? Even though I was a missionary, even though I was doing something that was against the law, I was making sure that I respected the police, and did what they asked, and tried to obey the traffic laws and rules, and all those things.

We ought, as Christians, to be good citizens, and do our best to abide by the laws of the land as much as we are able. So, all right, so continue on, to obey, to be ready for every good work.

[41 : 26] I think this is talking about, just as Christians living in the world, we need to benefit the world with our labor, with our work. If you're working in a job, you know, you're working for a company that's not a Christian company.

Most of us don't work for companies that are Christian companies. A lot of us work in companies that are very, sometimes even, anti- Christian. I've worked for companies in the past that had a very kind of anti- Christian outlook on life or worldview.

But we should still live our lives to do good to those around us, to do good to our neighbor, to serve them in ways, not just to kind of have a cloistered, siloed, you know, some people over in the past have kind of built these communities, right?

These kind of, I think about the monks, right? You build these monasteries where you have kind of a purely Christian community or people have started communes, if you will, Christian communes in the past where we just live together and work together.

We saw an interesting one. Was it called Gloria Vale or something like that out in New Zealand? There's a Christian commune out there. When you get into communes, things get a little wonky, a little odd.

[42 : 49] But people kind of living separate from the world. God has not called us to that. We are to live in the world. We are not of the world, the Bible says, but we are in the world. And so we should do good to the world.

When our neighbor is sick, we can go bring them a meal when they're going through a hard time. We can serve our neighbors in the workplace. And if you have maybe somebody who you've got a special skill and you've got somebody younger who's not a believer, but we can help train them and help them with career advice, different things like that.

Find opportunities to do good in the world around us. You know, one of the things I think about is all these hospitals around here. There's hospitals all over the country. There's hospitals.

It's amazing. You know, it hasn't always been this way, but most people are within, what, half an hour of a hospital. Right? What an incredible, what an incredible really gift to have that kind of availability to medical services.

And where do these hospitals come from? You know, you might think, well, in today, right, it's, it seems like they're owned by these big corporations and, you know, there's all kinds of problems and issues.

[44 : 02] But the whole hospital industry, where did it come from? It came from Christians. Christian churches. Christian denominations. Who started, you know, we want to help people in their physical, with their physical needs.

And so we as Christians should be ready to always do good works around us with our neighbors. Verse two, to speak evil of no man.

To speak evil of no man. What does this mean? The word speak no evil is actually the word blaspheme. So when we talk about blaspheme, usually when we use the word blasphemy, we're talking about blaspheming God.

God. That's just speaking evil of God. Accusing God of something that is not appropriate. And people do. They accuse God of, you know, being evil.

When he is not, he is good and loving and kind. But we can do the same thing. We can blaspheme against our neighbor. So that doesn't mean that we as Christians can never, for example, bring to light some corruption that's going on with some politician or magistrate or whatever.

[45 : 21] Right? Because that is, in a certain sense, speaking evil. You are speaking about the evil that someone is doing. You're accusing someone of something. It's always appropriate to accuse someone when you are correct.

In fact, even in this very book, what did Paul say about the Cretans? Does anybody remember? I have it written down here. It says, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons.

And so it's like, Paul, aren't you being a hypocrite? You know, you just said, don't speak evil of any man, but then you just said all this about these guys.

Well, if it's true, then it should be pointed out, at least most of the time. You shouldn't point out everything, right? When, you know, when your spouse has certain character faults, probably not a good idea to point them out at all times, right?

But, you know, it's appropriate, especially in certain situations, to call out evil. To go to your, you know, I've been at rallies at a government building, you know, going to Columbus and saying, hey, there's something wrong here, and we need things to, and here's what they are.

[46 : 37] Even our Declaration of Independence, it is a declaration of grievances. These are the grievances that we are standing against, and our Declaration about our rights and separating ourselves because of those things.

So it doesn't mean that we can never speak ill of somebody, but we shouldn't speak ill of somebody unjustly. Another example I can think of is John the Baptist.

Remember John the Baptist and his relationship with Herod? They were kind of buddies, right? Herod loved John the Baptist. That's not the case at all. John the Baptist publicly accused, or not accused, but basically rebuked Herod.

Why? Because he married, what is his brother's sister, I think? Or no, his brother's wife? Is that what it was? Or he had his brother? I don't know. He was doing some messed up things. And John the Baptist, in public, accused him and rebuked him openly.

Well, I thought it says, speak no evil of any man. That's not what it's talking about. In fact, we have a whole, all these Old Testament prophets, and they're constantly rebuking the Jews and the Syrians and everybody, right?

[47 : 58] That was what they were told to do by God. God, it's appropriate at times to accuse when it's right and just.

It also means, it also does not mean that we should never even mock or ridicule people. I think about this, there's a really popular website out there called the Babylon Bee. Has anybody ever seen that? Babylon Bee.

And man, they have gotten a lot of traction in the culture. And they tend to, you know, it's a satire website. So all their, quote, news articles are fictional, but they have a certain element of truth, right?

Satire is a wonderful way of exposing things that are true in a kind of funny, a funny way. And it gets people to pay attention when maybe they wouldn't otherwise.

And sometimes there's some mockery and ridicule in there. And mockery and ridicule is not always appropriate, but sometimes it is.

[49 : 03] Sometimes it is. It makes me think about, remember, it was Elijah, I think, and the prophets of Baal, was it? And they had this contest of lighting the fire, right?

Lighting the sacrifice. And God came through for Elijah. And fire from heaven came down and burned up the sacrifice, even though they had poured water on it.

And then all the priests of Baal, I think they were priests of Baal, all these priests of false gods tried to do the same thing with theirs. And they had all these dozens or hundreds of priests.

And they were whipping themselves and doing all kinds of things. And what happened? Nothing. And what did Elijah do? He said, well, sorry, guys.

You know, I guess it's not working. No, he mocked them. He said, well, maybe your God is on the toilet. That's what he said.

[50 : 06] Maybe your God is sitting on the toilet and he's not available to help you right now. And that's ridicule and that's mockery. Was that appropriate? Completely so. Totally appropriate.

But speak evil of no man. We should not misrepresent people just because maybe they're our political enemy or maybe our religious enemy.

You know, we're in different denominations or have a disagreement about theology or doctrine or something like that. So we're going to misrepresent them to make ourselves look good and to make them look bad. Completely inappropriate.

Or to exaggerate somebody's circumstances or what they've done or didn't do. Or maybe assuming that somebody did something because of their evil motives.

Can we know somebody's motives? Sometimes we can have an idea, right? But is it appropriate for us to just claim that we know somebody's motive? No. No. No. There was, you know, one of the things in our culture today is this whole concept of memes.

[51 : 13] You know, if you're on social media or the internet, you're constantly seeing all these memes. And it's an interesting way to communicate. I don't know how healthy it is. But, you know, I don't know if it's good or bad.

I'm somewhat indifferent. I think it has value to it. But, you know, the content, I think, determines whether it's good or bad. But a friend of mine, somebody who I really respect, put out a meme.

And it was a meme of Hillary Clinton. Now, can anybody think of any reason why you would ever want to criticize Hillary Clinton? Okay, right? There's no shortage of things, you know, to be critical of, you know, for most politicians, but Hillary Clinton especially.

But this meme was a close-up of her face and showed, like, all of her wrinkles, right? She's getting up in age. And I can't remember exactly what the content was. But it just came across to me as inappropriate.

This is somebody who I really respected. It came across as inappropriate that what you're mocking and ridiculing is not something evil that they're doing, not an evil policy or something that they're promoting, but you're ridiculing, really, their looks, their face.

[52 : 22] And that is completely inappropriate. We shouldn't be the kind of people that would do that kind of thing. So focus on, you know, good and evil. And so if we need to speak up when people are doing evil things, we ought to.

But don't speak ill of people. Don't accuse people of wrong things. Don't exaggerate. Don't assign bad motives when you don't know what they are. The next thing he talks about is to be peaceable.

In the King James, it actually says, no brawler. Other translations use the word, don't be contentious or don't be quarrelsome. Instead, you know, the other word is to be gentle.

That was a general way of life. Again, these are all, just like in the Proverbs, when it comes to virtues, there typically are exceptions. There's not exceptions to every virtue. When the Bible says, do not commit adultery, it's not like there are exceptions to the rule.

There are certain times when it's appropriate to commit adultery. Is that true? No, it never is. Or to murder, which means to kill the innocent. Is there ever a time where that's appropriate? There is not.

[53 : 29] But when it comes to other virtues, like gentleness, right, gentleness, that's kind of a rule of thumb. We ought to be gentle with others. What if you're fighting a war?

Should you be gentle? You should not. In fact, you should use violence. It's appropriate to use violence. But as a general rule of thumb, in our way of life, we ought to be gentle with those around us.

Peaceable, not contentious. Then he says this, showing all humility to all men. And then I think what follows next is kind of expounding on that.

For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

That used to be us. There are people that are around us that we work with, that are our neighbors, even people who are rulers over us, that are doing bad things.

[54 : 32] But we ought to always keep in mind that we were there at one time. That we were once foolish. We were once disobedient. We were once deceived.

We were once served our various lusts and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy. And we also were hateful and hated one another.

So we ought to be as salt and light in the world and have compassion on them in the same way that God has had compassion on us. Because we are Christians.

Why? Are we Christians because we have always just avoided those kinds of bad behaviors? No. Some people get that idea. I think some people in the world, that's how they view Christians.

Oh, those are those people that think that they're better than everybody else. That's what people think. A lot of people. And why do they think that? Sometimes they might get that from an actual Christian.

[55 : 33] But I think most of the time, you know, if my observation is accurate, I think most of the time, they get it from others who accuse falsely what Christians are like. People who listen to those who are false accusers.

Well, those Christians, they're like this. And I've talked to people and, you know, they have all these ideas about what a Christian is like that they just think that they're better than everybody else.

And, you know, I find out that they've never had a Christian friend in their life. They don't know any Christians. They don't have any, you know, except what they might see on, you know, TV or whatever.

And Christians are always portrayed well on television, right? In movies. We are the ones, not that have lived better than everyone.

We are the ones who have been shown mercy in God's grace. And then it continues on in verse four, but when the kindness and love of God, our Savior, toward man appeared.

[56 : 32] So we are the beneficiaries of that kindness and love of God, our Savior. You know, as Christians, Paul talks here about how this is how we once were, but we should never think that, well, that's them and I'm, I'm never like that.

We should always keep in mind that just because these behaviors that typify the world, that that's only out there.

Is it possible for us as Christians to ever be foolish or disobedient or to ever be deceived or to ever serve various lusts and pleasures?

Is it possible for us as Christians to ever live in malice or to be envious? Is it possible for us as Christians to ever be hateful or hate one another?

It is. And so, we ought not to live that way. That is not the way that God intends for us to live, but it is things that, these are things that we can fall into.

[57 : 42] And so we should be careful when it comes to these things. But when the kindness and love of God, our Savior, appeared to man, you know, this is talking about when Jesus, our Savior, appeared.

And he changed everything. He changed everything for us. He gave us a way of hope through grace, not through anything that we've done, but just purely by his mercy.

We'll get into that more next week. I think we'll go ahead and end there, and next week we'll have an opportunity to talk more about God's kindness and love towards us.

I guess a microphone, we can use this one if this is easy enough, if we have anything. Isabella? I just turned it on. And we might not have any questions or comments, but if we do, we'll make some time available for that.

Any thoughts? Any thoughts? Somebody was stretching back there.

[59 : 02] Close call. About obeying laws, there's an example in the Old Testament when the Jews were taken into captivity and God told them specifically, you're being punished and if you comply, you will live.

If you don't comply, you will die. And that was, they were being taken captive to Babylon, I believe. Anyway, you're being punished, so go along with being taken into captivity because if you do, then you will live.

They even told them to pray for the town that you were in for their prosperity. So, while you're in captivity, you can be blessed. Be blessed, but if you don't comply with going into captivity, you will die.

Yeah, that's a great point. I actually had that in mind. I'm not sure exactly where that's at, but part of their, Israel's captivity. They're commanded to, you know, live under subjection and, you know, that doesn't mean that we need to always give in to, you know, the people that might oppress us as Christians, but we should still seek the good of our nation.

You know, even, you know, we have a lot of historical, how do I want to put this?

[60 : 27] You know, love for our country, right? We have a lot that we look back to, you know, the founding of our country and all the things that we have done well as a nation and there's kind of a love and endearment for our country and it's all these things going wrong now.

It might be, you might think, well, you know, forget, you know, forget this country, but we should love our country and even if you live in China, I think it's still appropriate to love your country.

That doesn't mean you have to love the Communist Party, but you should, it's appropriate to love your country. I think that's good. Yeah, Isabella, you want to run the mic over? Yes, we see two good examples of a couple that went into captivity basically, but then served the government that they were under.

Yeah. Joseph, of course, going into Egypt and Daniel under, earlier than that, Daniel under Nebuchadnezzar and his government and, you know, they must have been doing everything according to the rules and regulations of those governments or they wouldn't have risen in such high authority.

And like you said earlier, only when they disobeyed a commandment, you know, one of God's rules, commandments, did they disobey that government. Otherwise, they did what that, obviously did what that government wanted them to do and accordingly and so forth.

[61 : 59] Yeah, that's right. Another example is Esther, right? The story of Esther and her, what was her cousin? It was her cousin, right?

Mordecai. Thank you. Mordecai and, you know, they were living as Jews in a foreign land and, you know, I mean, to be honest, it was probably more risky for them to disobey the laws than it is for us.

You know, there is this principle of like free speech and liberty to be against the government but even today, right, in many countries that liberty does not exist to ask for a redress of grievances or anything like that and so I'm sure even back then it was huge risk for Esther to go even to her husband who was the king to just ask for a favor and so, Daniel, yeah, lots of examples.

Anything else? All right, we'll end there. Let's end a word of prayer. Father, again, thank you for your word and may the words and the lessons that we've learned here from the scriptures, may they take hold in our life and not just be words that we see and then kind of flitter away but that these truths take hold of our heart that we might be changed by them through the washing of the water of your word that they would wash us and make us more like you.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Thanks, everybody.