

Grace in Action

Titus 2:15-3:1-2

Intro: Do you believe that a church can actually change a town or community? A church, a group of called out followers of Jesus Christ, do you believe that it can actually make a distinct difference in society? That it could actually change culture? What would it take for Brunswick, Medina, & Strongsville, these large suburban communities, to really think highly of Christians and the churches to which they belong, and to in fact say, I hope we never lose that church. I can't think of anyone who has had a more positive impact in our town than that group of Christians!

In Acts 17:6 we find a powerful accusation made of Paul, Silas, and the early church. "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also." Then you turn over to chapter 19 and find a Riot at Ephesus that was started by a Silversmith named Demetrius who made his living selling little idols. Apparently, the gospel that had been preached there had made such a profound impact on the community that sales were plummeting. Notice, that I can see Paul never stood on a soapbox and preached let's boycott Demetrius' silver statues. The Gospel was preached. Radical transformation was taking place in people's lives. The world was taking notice and like everything else, some people saw it as a threat while other people were being attracted to it by the hordes.

Here in Titus we are about to study another instruction section. Chapter 1 lays the ground work. Set the churches in order. Raise the bar for leadership and rebuke and if they wont listen remove the pretenders. Chapter 2 Paul then teaches what the relationships inside the church are suppose to look like. You have to start internally. The church members must understand how important their relationships to one another truly are. If you can't get the family to love, encourage, and train one another you will never impact the world outside. You must get the house in order. He ends this instruction with the powerful "why." One commentator wrote "*The highest and purest motivation for Christian behavior is not based on what we can do for God but rather upon what God has done for us and yet will do.*" God's grace Saved us. It trains us. It gives us hope. It possesses us and empowers us to be zealous for good works.

Now we get to chapter 3 and Paul moves his instruction from relationships within the church to how grace transforms the way we live before the world and how that true transformation attracts the lost and dying world. He starts with 2 verses of instruction as to "what" that should look like and will finish the letter with yet another reminder of the "why" it must look like that.

Big Idea: A healthy church will show the world Grace in Action!

Read Text & Pray

I. Significant Instructions

A. With All Authority

1. We are Talking Spiritual Authority

- a) The authority only extends to teaching aligned with Biblical Teaching

- b) A Pastor has authority only within the context of God's Word
- c) The authority, yes even Paul's apostolic authority, that he is referencing is only good if it is in line with an therefore an extension of Christ's Authority
- 2. Non-Spiritual:
 - a) Personal Authority - I am in charge of your lives
 - b) Organizational Authority - The church is in charge of your lives
 - c) Intellectual Authority - My opinion or understanding trumps yours
 - d) Experiential Authority - My experience, tradition, or gut feeling
- B. Declare These Things - Gospel & Good Works are always connected!
 - 1. The Gospel teaching Paul has already covered.
 - a) 1:1-3 - An Example to Follow (Gospel Authority)
 - b) 2:11-14 - Trained by Grace (Gospel Action)
 - c) 3:3-7 - Gracious Reminder (Gospel Review)
 - 2. The practical teaching Paul has already covered
 - a) Raising the bar for Leadership
 - b) Rebuking and/or remove pretenders
 - c) Good Relationships within the Church
- C. Let No One Disregard You
 - 1. This cannot be ignored or silenced
 - 2. It is of utmost importance - It is how the world will see Jesus
 - 3. Lead by example!

II. Five Specific Instructions

- A. Submit to & Obey Authority - **Obey the Law**
 - 1. Be great citizens - law abiding citizens, civil servants
 - 2. Stop protesting or challenging issues in a disrespectful manner
 - 3. Stop using "obey God rather than man" resistance in non-biblical situations
 - a) Are there times for legitimate civil disobedience? Yes and scripture does even give us some examples but they are the rare exceptions not the rule.
 - b) We have a tendency to want to live in the exceptions!
 - 4. Example of Adam Laskos @ Black River Public School
- B. Be Ready for every Good Work - **Serve your Community**
 - 1. What are the needs around us? What are the needs of our community?
 - 2. Stop looking at the community as a resource for us and start thinking of ourselves as the resource for them. We are to be ready to give, help, serve!
 - 3. Could a church actually:
 - a) empty the foster system?
 - b) Offer marriage counseling, family counseling, and supervised visitation
 - c) Partner w/ Police & County Courts for all community service orders
 - d) Shut down sex or drug trafficking routes through the community?
 - e) feed the hungry, provide material needs, offer shelter...
 - 4. Every communities needs are different: Are we ready for every good work?
- C. Speak Evil of No one - **Guard Your Tongue**
 - 1. Course and inappropriate language should not cross our lips

2. Family Members, Neighbors, Troubled Teens, Ethnic Minority Groups, Politicians, Special Interest Groups,
3. Strong Opinions about those you disagree with do not show grace attractive
4. Stereotypes and Judgmental attitudes do not show grace attractive
5. As Grandma used to say, "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all!"

D. Avoid Quarreling - **Refuse to Fight**

1. Be peacemakers - look to the example of Christ
2. Be anxious and ready to heal not hurt
3. This is not a mark of weakness...it is a mark of wisdom and strength.
4. Look down to verse 9
5. Think before you post on social media...stop saying hurtful things. How many times has your rant or your post changed someone's mind? How many times has it drawn someone to God's grace?
6. Even if you have "truth" on your side or the opposition is attacking you it is never appropriate to use hateful, harsh rhetoric...
7. I understand you may have a strong opinion or be a person who feels they have to speak their mind but please remember because of grace it is not about you anymore... your life is to point people to Jesus. Keep focused on the main thing!
8. If there was ever someone who could have shamed people through their tongue it was Christ...

E. Be Gentle - **Be Friendly to All**

1. Are there people that you just can't bring yourself to love?
2. This is speaking to genuine humility
 - a) We do really think we are better than others. - It is evidenced in our actions and thoughts.
 - b) Is there anyone that you would be uncomfortable sitting next to in church? Think of the unlovely, the unlawful, the unkempt, the unruly, the unusual, the different, the enemy, the thorn, the opposition. Got them in your mind —> Yes...even them!
 - c) Grace in Action is show true humility, kindness, gentleness, and courtesy to all people. It is treating all people like VIPs.
3. I call you back to the Grace that appeared and how he treated people
 - a) A harsh roman soldier
 - b) Uneducated fishermen
 - c) Tax collectors
 - d) A woman with multiple husbands
 - e) A couple different prostitutes
 - f) The sick, poor, disabled, outcasts, widows, children, etc
4. The only ones he was harsh with were the self righteous blind guides and he could even do that well because he was God and could perfectly see their hearts...you and I can't do that!

So What?

This is hard teaching. You could probably say it is impossible teaching. In a way it is like the further we get into this letter on how to build a healthy church Paul's instruction is getting more impossible. That is the point. It starts with Grace. It teaches us that we need each other and that we cannot live this radical life in isolation. It is why we have decided to move towards growth groups. We need intentional life on life investment in order to display for the world this radical grace in action.

Can God use FBC to impact Brunswick, Medina, Strongsville? Absolutely, and I believe He desires to do so. It is why we are still here. It is why He has brought us to this exact moment in history. But we must take the responsibility and repent of past failures and indifference towards others both personal and corporate. The simple truth is that we have not always loved others the way Christ loves us. We have failed to impact our community and let our light shine. Thank God for his grace and forgiveness! We must partner together and submit to the Training of His grace to become a people that are Zealous for good works.

Where do we start? Prayerfully look back over the list and as we approach the table of Grace pick out one or two of the instructions and commit them to the Lord today.

May the God of all grace strengthen us and help us grow together in this pursuit of showing the lost community of Brunswick God's grace in action!