

# MESSAGE 3: THE CIVIC DUTIES OF A BELIEVER TITUS 03:01–02

## *Introduction*

The thrust of this passage is not the rulers of government and their behaviour; the thrust is the believer and his duty to the state. Usually the believer can do little about how the authorities in government conduct their affairs, but the believer can do a great deal about his behaviour as a citizen within the state. And God is very, very clear about the believer's behaviour. Keep in mind that such terrible leaders as Nero were ruling when God led Paul to give these instructions to Titus and the believers on the island of Crete. Six duties of the Christian citizen are clearly spelled out.

- I. He is to obey the laws (v. 1).
- II. He is to do good works (v. 1).
- III. He is not to speak evil (v. 2).
- IV. He is to be peaceable (v. 2).
- V. He is to be gentle (v. 2).
- VI. He is to show humility (v. 2).

## **I. *Titus 03:01 Citizens Obey Civil Law***

The Christian citizen is to *obey the laws of a nation, both the rulers and their authority*. Note the double command: “to be subject” and “to be obedient.” This is strong; God expects believers to keep the command. All civil authority is to be obeyed, even the laws of one's own local community as well as the laws of one's state and nation. Why is this so important? The reason is self-evident; it is perfectly clear: without law and the keeping of the law society would be in utter chaos.

=> Lawlessness would run wild.

=> No one would be safe to walk the streets.

=> People would have to live behind closed doors.

=> Abuse, attacks, murder and war would be a constant threat.

=> No property would be safe.

=> There would be no public roads, transportation, water, sewage or electrical systems, for there would be no law to collect taxes. And even if there was, no one would honour it.

=> There would be no military police or fire protection for the same reason.

Without law and the keeping of the law there can be no society and no community, no life together, no bond to tie people together. Law, rulers and their authority, are an

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utter necessity to keep people from becoming wild beasts in a jungle of unrestrained selfishness and lawlessness.

Chaos is not God's will for the world; law and order are God's will. God wills men to live in a world of love, joy and peace — a world of perfect law and order. Therefore, the believer is to set the example: he is to obey the rulers and the laws of his community and nation. He is to show how *loving and joyful, peaceful and wonderful* life can be if people will obey God and obey the civil authorities of this world.

**Exo 22:28** *“Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people.”*

**Eccl 10:20** *Do not revile the king even in your thoughts, or curse the rich in your bedroom, because a bird of the air may carry your words, and a bird on the wing may report what you say.*

**Acts 23:5** *Paul replied, “Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: ‘Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.’”*

**Rom 13:1** *Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.*

**1 Pet 2:13-14** *Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.*

**1 Pet 2:17** *Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king.*

## **II. Titus 03:01 Citizens Do Good Works**

The Christian citizen is to be ready to do *whatever is good, every good work*; is to work and serve within his community for the good of all citizens, and he is to work and serve diligently. The word “ready” (hetoimous) means to be willing; to be prepared; to jump and be the first to diligently serve the community. And note: it is “Whatever is good, every good work” that he is to be ready to do. *Whatever is good, good works* does not refer only to church work; it refers to the day by day employment of people and to the volunteer and service needs of a community. Every community is filled with needs, the needs of the lonely, poor, shut in, elderly, orphaned, homeless, sick — an innumerable list of needs that cry out for community attention. It is the duty of Christian citizens to take the lead in reaching out to meet these needs. The Christian citizen is to be ready and diligent, taking the lead in every good work within the community and nation. Keep in mind that a person's employment, his day-to-day job, is a major work that contributes to society. No matter how mundane, routine and unimportant a person may feel his work is, it is not. It is very significant, for it contributes and helps to meet the needs of his fellow citizens and community.

*2 Cor 9:8* And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

*Heb 13:16* And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

*James 4:17* Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

*Psa 37:3* Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.

### **III. Titus 03:02 Citizens Do not Speak Evil**

The Christian citizen is *to speak evil of no person*. No citizen is to be slandered or verbally abused and torn down. God's ideal for society is this: all citizens working to build up and enrich the lives of each other and their community and nation. If a person, ruler or citizen, is working to build us up, why would we speak evil of him? We know that in day to day practical living, we live in an evil world where some citizens are selfish and greedy, and others commit some terrible and atrocious acts. It is this that causes chaos in society.

But note: the Christian citizen is not to speak evil against any citizen, not even an evil ruler. The answer to reaching evil people is not cursing, reviling, slandering, criticizing and tearing them down. Verbal abuse only causes more evil — active retaliation. The only answer to reaching an evil citizen is to reach out to him in kindness, trying to lead him to change and live the way he should as a contributing citizen to the community. But note this: reaching out to evil people and not speaking evil against them does not mean that we do not use firm, strong and warning words. We are never to give license to evil, nor to indulge the selfish and sinful acts of people. We are to speak with authority and strength against evil and untruth. We are to warn, and the community is to back up the warning with just control, even if it means imprisonment.

The point is this: there is no place in a just society for citizens speaking evil against each other. Cursing, reviling, slandering and railing at each other is not the way to help those in rebellion against God, government and man. The way to help is to reach out with kindness; and then if kindness fails, to reach out with strong, authoritative warnings — and then back up the warning. There is never a place for evil speaking. Christian citizens are to take the lead in speaking kind and strong words, words that warn against selfish and evil behaviour.

**Thought 1.** What an indictment against society! Even more, what a terrible indictment against those who speak evil against others within the church!

*Psa 101:5* Whoever slanders his neighbour in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure.

*Prov 10:18* He who conceals his hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.

**Prov 11:9** *With his mouth the godless destroys his neighbour, but through knowledge the righteous escape.*

**Jer 9:4** *“Beware of your friends; do not trust your brothers. For every brother is a deceiver, and every friend a slanderer.”*

#### **IV. Titus 03:02 Citizens Live in Peace**

The Christian citizen is to be peaceable, not a brawler (amachos). The Christian is not to be...

- a fighting, contentious person
- a person who is walking around looking for an argument or fight
- a person who walks around with a chip on his shoulder looking for controversy or argument
- a person who is so opinionated and stubborn, thinking everyone else is always wrong
- a person who is always criticizing or talking about others, stirring up trouble and disturbing feelings, causing division.

The Christian citizen is to be the very opposite: he is to be meek and peaceful. This, of course, does not mean that the Christian citizen does not speak up for what is right; he does. And he is strong in his stand, refusing to give in to the license and indulgence of evil. But he seeks peace where it is possible, and he seeks to lead others to be peaceable.

**Psa 120:7** *I am a man of peace; but when I speak, they are for war.*

**Psa 140:2** *Who devise evil plans in their hearts and stir up war every day.*

**Prov 3:30** *Do not accuse a man for no reason — when he has done you no harm.*

**Prov 15:18** *A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.*

**Prov 17:14** *Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.*

**Prov 17:19** *He who loves a quarrel loves sin; he who builds a high gate invites destruction.*

**Prov 18:6** *A fool’s lips bring him strife, and his mouth invites a beating.*

**Prov 20:3** *It is to a man’s honour to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.*

**Prov 25:8** *Do not bring hastily to court, for what will you do in the end if your neighbour puts you to shame?*

**Prov 26:17** *Like one who seizes a dog by the ears is a passer-by who meddles in a quarrel not his own.*

**Prov 26:21** *As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.*

**Phil 2:3** *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.*

**2 Tim 2:14** *Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarrelling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.*

**2 Tim 2:24** *And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.*

## V. **Titus 03:02 Citizens Are Gentle and Considerate**

The Christian citizen must be *considerate, gentle* (epieikeis). The word is difficult to translate into English. It is translated by others as gentleness, forbearance, reasonableness, consideration, agreeableness, courtesy, patience and softness. There is the tendency to say that either forbearance or gentleness is the better translation. It means that there is *something better than mere justice* — a gracious gentleness. Christian citizens are to be gentle and forbearing in dealing with other citizens.

**Thought 1.** The point is well-taken: we must be gentle and forbearing in dealing with citizens. The last thing that we must do is to criticize, condemn, censor, neglect and ignore citizens. We must reach out to the people of the world with the gospel, and we must treat them with a *loving gentleness*. We must be gentle, having absolutely nothing to do with harshness. Too many of us are harsh and critical or neglectful and withdrawn. Too many of us are wrapped in the cloak of religion having nothing to do with reaching out to the lost. The desperate need of the hour is for us to reach out with the gospel in a *spirit of love and consideration, in a spirit of gentleness*.

**Eph 4:2** *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*

**Col 3:13** *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

**1 Th 2:7** *But we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.*

**2 Tim 2:24** *And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.*

**Titus 3:2** *To slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.*

**James 3:17** *But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.*

## VI. **Titus 03:02 Citizens Show Humility and Meekness**

The Christian citizen must show *true humility* (prautes) to *all* citizens. The word means to be gentle, tender, humble, mild, considerate but strongly so. Humility has the strength to control and discipline, and it does so at the right time.

- a. Humility has *a humble state of mind*. But this does not mean the person is weak, cowardly and bowing. The humble person simply loves people and loves peace; therefore, he walks humbly among men regardless of their status and circumstance in life. Associating with the poor and lowly of this earth does not bother the humble person. He desires to be a friend to all and to help all as much as possible.
- b. Humility has *a strong state of mind*. It looks at situations and wants justice and right to be done. It is not a weak mind that ignores and neglects evil and wrong-doing, abuse and suffering.

=> If someone is suffering, humility steps in and does what it can to help.

=> If evil is being done, humility does what it can to stop and correct it.

=> If evil is running rampant and indulging itself, humility actually strikes out in anger. However, note a crucial point: the anger is always at the right time and against the right thing.

- c. Humility has *strong self-control*. The humble person controls his spirit and mind. He controls the lusts of his flesh (sinful nature). He does not give way to ill-temper, retaliation, passion, indulgence or license. The humble person dies to himself, to what his flesh would like to do, and he does the right thing — exactly what God wants done.

In summary, the gentle man walks in a humble, tender but strong state of mind; denies himself, giving utmost consideration to others. He shows a control and righteous anger against injustice and evil. A gentle man forgets self and lives for others because of what Christ has done for him.

=> God is gentle.

**Gal 5:22-23** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

=> Jesus Christ was gentle and humble.

**Mat 11:29** *“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*

=> Believers are to be gentle.

**Gal 6:1** *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.*

**Eph 4:1-3** *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

**2 Tim 2:25** *Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth.*

**Titus 3:2** *To slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.*

**James 1:21** *Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.*

**James 3:13** *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.*

**1 Pet 3:4** *Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ■*