



THIS IS YOUR LIFE!

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By the Book™ A Chapter by
Chapter Bible Study Series
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Let's Begin

The television series, Dragnet, transitioned from a radio drama to a T.V. show in 1951 and became an instant hit. The series spawned several movies and newly created series in 1989. Sergeant Joe Friday's famous line captured pop culture everywhere and is still embedded in our collective sub-conscience, "Just the facts ma'am."

Paul is wrapping up his final thoughts to Titus on the Christian life. He could theologize about many things. However, Paul is concerned to summarize the Christian life. In essence, he wants Titus to know the spiritual facts and just the spiritual facts.

As we make our way through chapter three, let's focus on the memorable outline below:

- I. We Must Consider the Facts of our Past Life (vv. 1-3)**
- II. We Must Consider the Facts of our Present Life (vv. 4-6)**
- III. We Must Consider the Facts of our Prospective Life (vv. 7-15)**

I. We Must Consider the Facts of our Past Life (vv. 1-3)

Paul opens the chapter with two verses which could be considered a "Christian citizenship manual." He writes, "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men (vv. 1-2). While believers are on their way to heaven, they cannot forget they have plenty of duties down here. Christians must be model citizens by being subject to the powers (that is, the authority of civil law) by obedience. Speaking evil of no one, Christians must work hard and live peaceably with all men.

Once Paul has offered a general summary of our earthly citizenship, he moves on, exhorting believers to examine our past lives, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another (v. 3).

The emphasis concerns our former life, a life without Jesus Christ. The Apostle paints a picture which serves as an accurate snapshot of every unbeliever. And, while we should never glory in our old life, we must never forget it either. In other words, we must recall what sin does to us in every dimension of our lives.

First, sin affects us *intellectually*. Paul refers to our past as being foolish. What Paul has in mind does not imply a low IQ, or since we have never attended college, we are therefore foolish. Instead, Paul is referring to a fundamental lack of understanding. In other words, in the past, we were ignorant of spiritual things. Elsewhere he writes, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them (Eph. 4:18). Sin darkens the intellect (cp. Rom. 1:21-22). The fact is, we were never really intelligent until we got to know Jesus!

In addition, our foolishness drove us to disobedience. In the beginning, we sinned from ignorance. However, we continued to

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Reflection Connection

Take a moment to reflect on your past life. How is it different from your present life?

willfully refuse to be either enlightened or assisted. Jesus Himself said we loved darkness rather than light (John 3:19). While we have plenty of evidence for the truth of Scripture and the fact of Christ's resurrection, we nevertheless suppress the truth (Rom. 1: 25).

The end of disobedience is deception. Paul says our past life can be characterized as being deceived. We were led astray like wandering sheep. We lived in a plastic world of our own making. We easily were confused with false doctrines and submitted to false gods. Intellectually, we were bankrupt.

Second, sin affects us *morally*. We were stuck serving our own selfish lusts and pleasures. Men and women without Christ are slaves to terrible desires they cannot control. Their hearts have an irreparable hole which nothing can satisfy. St. Augustine once said, our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee. People without Christ desperately attempt to fill the hole in their lives with every conceivable substitute. They thrive on malice and envy, developing negative attitudes of ill-will toward others (see below). The term envy carries the idea of wasting away. Hence, it acts as an acid which eats away one's spiritual life leaving only a lifeless, empty hull behind. Being cursed with an insatiable appetite for sin, our past lives were not only *intellectually* bankrupt but also *morally* bankrupt.

Third, sin affects us *socially*. Paul's point is simple: *personal intellectual and moral corruption inevitably leads to social corruption*. We become hateful toward others. Our lives are personally offensive and therefore we compete in hating one another. In short, there is just no getting along. What a dark, pitiful picture our past life is!

II. We Must Consider the Facts of our Present Life (vv. 4-6)

In order to examine our lives thoroughly, we must include a trip backwards. We must examine what we were before coming to Christ. However, we cannot remain in the past. Instead we must move to the present. What is our life now that we are in Christ? Paul writes, "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

Not by works 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 (vv. 4-6). No passage of Scripture is more significant in understanding what happened to us when we were saved than these few verses. Our wrecked past life got more than a shiny new bumper or a spiffy paint job. God bought and paid for us a brand new car!

The amazing, infinite love of God cannot be missed in this passage. While God hates the sinner's sin, God loves the sinner who sins. The whole Gospel is on display here.

First, God the Father thought the Gospel. In four short words, God's true thoughts about us are summarized. His kindness, mercy, love, and grace are fully expressed. Our salvation originates with God. C.S. Lewis once said, no one would have 'thought up' Christianity. By this Lewis meant the message of the Gospel is just

Reflection Connection

When you think of the love of God, what is the one image in your mind which best captures the essence of God's love? Explain.



not the stuff of the imagination. What kind of a God who hates sin with all His being would become the very thing He hates just to rescue those who love doing what He hates? No god of our making! Instead a god of our making would have us not only pay for our sin but work our way out of our predicament. Yet, according to the Biblical Gospel, it is Not by works of righteousness which we have done. The Gospel at root is God's Gospel. The thought of our salvation was in His heart before sin was performed by our hands.

Second, God the Holy Spirit wrought the Gospel. The Holy Spirit *regenerates* us, renews us, and refreshes us. In Paul's words, the Holy Spirit is responsible for the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. In Scripture, sin is seen as filth (cp. Eph. 5:26; John 13:10; Zech. 13:1). When we come to Christ, the Spirit washes us (1 Cor. 6:11). And, the instrument by which we are washed is the blood of Jesus Christ (1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5; 7:14). In addition, the Spirit *renews* us. Salvation is an instantaneous change. However, it is also a daily change, a moment-by-moment relationship with the Lord Jesus. Paul says He shed on us abundantly. There is no limit to God's grace being poured out onto our lives (cp. 2 Cor. 4:16; Rom. 12:2).

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Third, God the Son brought the Gospel. Paul says the Gospel came through Jesus Christ our Saviour. While the Father is the *source* of Gospel grace, and the Holy Spirit is the *force* of Gospel grace, the Son is the *course* of Gospel grace. He is the path to salvation. When Christ appeared He brought salvation with Him. Even as the angel announced to Joseph concerning the Child Mary bore, the angel's focus was on Jesus coming to save people from sin (Matt. 1:21). Salvation comes in no other way. Jesus Himself said, I am the way (John 14:6). Through Him, we have life (1 John 5:11-12). Life—both spiritual life now and eternal life continuing into the future—come to us because we are justified by His grace (v. 7a). We are declared righteous by God. He counts us, though sinners we are, not guilty, because of Christ's sacrificial death for us. Consequently, He placed upon us His beautiful, clean garment of righteousness.

III. We Must Consider the Facts of our Prospective Life (vv. 7-15)

While we must not forget the past, we cannot dwell there either. We must move to what our lives are now. Jesus saved us from our past in order to give us a satisfying life in the present. We really can be happy as we wait on the Lord! However, the riches awaiting the believer have no equal in this world. Paul said it best elsewhere, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).



We live with exciting hope and fruitful prospect for the future. Paul expresses it this way to Titus, “we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (v. 7a).

First, our heir-ship is *real*. An heir is one who receives a possession by right of sonship. According to Scripture, Christ is the heir of all things (Heb. 1:2). Moreover, He secured an inheritance for us (Heb. 9:15). When did we become heirs? The moment we trusted Christ! And, to offer us a full guarantee, He gave us the Holy Spirit as a “down payment” (Eph. 1:13-14).

Second, our heir-ship is *reserved*. Jesus said it like this, “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:2-3). Jesus is building for us a city, an eternal dwelling abode in the heavens. He reserves our place—our mansion—and nothing can rob us of the glory of our inheritance with Him.

Third, our heir-ship is *redemptive*. Paul closes out his correspondence to Titus with a focus on the redemptive nature of our salvation in Christ.

He writes, This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men (v. 8).

Paul first looks at a *faithful* saying. Initially, salvation is received by faith. Later, however, experience catches up with faith. The Bible balances out faith and works. While works never save, works demonstrate being saved. In short, faith is the *root* of salvation for those who believed in God. On the other hand, works are the *fruit* of salvation. Hence, Paul exhorts believers to maintain good works. Good works prove the reality of one’s faith.

James puts it like this, Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? (2:17, 20). Faith which produces no works must be assumed to be without life. Or, in other words, when there is no heartbeat, no pulse, and no brainwaves, one is examine a corpse not a living, breathing human being. It is the same with a fruitless faith.

Furthermore, Paul examines a frightful situation. He writes, But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself (vv. 9-11). False teaching is not new in the church. Indeed the Apostles had to deal with it as illustrated abundantly by Paul to Titus.

Foolish questions about insignificant matters lead disciples astray. Controversies and speculations becoming the bread and butter of teaching can only spell disaster for Christian discipleship (cp. 1 Tim. 1:4). Indeed according to Paul, people who focus on such matters ultimately become condemned of himself. In other words, they are subverted which carries the idea of being warped and

Reflection Connection

How is the Holy Spirit a blessing in your own life? Explain.

Initially, salvation is received by faith.



twisted. The only remedy for a warped person is admonition. If admonition is not successful, the only alternative is to reject them.

Paul ends his letter with a final salute to Titus. He encourages him to reach the lost (vv. 12-13), build the church, and to carry on living for Jesus (vv. 14-15).

Golden Greek Nugget

Paul insists believers are to “maintain good works” (v. 9). The Greek term translated “to maintain” is *proistemi*, which originally meant “to preside, to rule” or “to cause to set before.” The implication is to be diligent to make something happen. In this case, Paul was saying Christians must make good works happen. They cannot sit passively by and wait to be “moved” to action. Believers are by nature proactive when it comes to good deeds.

Wrap Up

In this study, Paul has captured the essence of the Christian life. In a broad sweep, we were carried on a journey to consider how the gospel has affected our past life, our present life, and our future life. No dimension of our existence remains untouched by the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ.

