

## Pacesetters Devotional Titus 3:1-7

*Titus 3:1* Remind them to be . . . ready for every good deed, <sup>2</sup> to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all people. <sup>3</sup> For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. <sup>4</sup> But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for humanity appeared, <sup>5</sup> He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

In a time of unprecedented social division and political acrimony, we will either be conformed to our culture's dysfunctions, or we will be transformed by God to stand out as an attractive alternative. Jesus called for His followers to embrace latter option, commanding us to be "salt and light" in the midst of a rotting and blind society.

But what does it look like to relate as "salt and light" to neighbors and work-associates and family members who do not know Jesus? This is the first question that Paul answers in this passage. It may be helpful for you to pose each of Paul's answers as questions to yourself.

- "Am I ready for every good deed?" We should look for opportunities to do good to our neighbors, and to contribute to the health of our communities. Tim Keller poses this challenge: "Are we the kind of church of which (our community) says: 'We don't share a lot of their beliefs, but I shudder to think of this (community) without them. They are



such an important part of the community. They give so much! If they left we'd have to raise taxes because others won't give of themselves like they do.”<sup>1</sup> Tax-funded projects help many people, but they always leave many community needs unmet. What if Christians were known for voluntarily filling those gaps?

- “Do I malign no one?” “Malign” is the Greek word from which we get our word “blaspheme” – to slander or tear down God or other people who are created in His image. We expect people who are alienated from God to validate themselves by condemning others. But tragically, it is Christians who are often known for their negative rants against those who disagree with their beliefs and ethics. How much better to follow Ole Hallesby’s maxim: “If you have time to judge them, you have time to pray for them.”
- “Am I peaceable?” “Peaceable” means literally “not fighting.” In Romans 12:18, Paul says: “If possible, so far as it depends upon you, be at peace with all people.” Unfortunately, many Christians use social media to express belligerence and incivility that they probably would not express face to face. But research shows that such on-line incivility eventually makes us more uncivil in our face to face relationships. What might happen to Jesus’ reputation if we prioritized genuine friendliness in both contexts?
- “Am I gentle, showing every consideration to all people?” “Gentle” means “showing forbearance.” Forbearance is the opposite of being prickly and easily annoyed. Forbearance is winsome patience with other people’s foibles and discourtesies and hostility. Likewise, we should be known for our genuine respect and consideration for “all people,” regardless of their

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Keller in John Piper & Justin Taylor (general editors), *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World* (Crossway Books, 2007), p. 122.



race or gender or sexual behavior or socio-economic status.  
What a contrast to the prejudice that permeates our society!

Paul's lifestyle prescription rings true to us, but it raises a second question: How can we live this way? If you are like me, you realize what a humanly impossible challenge this is. Left to my own motivation and resources, the best I can muster is superficial niceness toward other people. But superficial niceness will not make our neighbors and work-associates and family members positively curious about Jesus. Relating to others the way Paul prescribes requires supernatural motivation and empowerment. This is why Paul goes on in vss. 4-7 to explain how God's grace is fully sufficient to transform us into people who represent Jesus well.<sup>2</sup>

- *“God initiated His kindness and mercy toward me when I least deserved it” (vss. 3-5a).* God didn't rescue us because of any righteous deeds we performed toward Him or others. Far from it – we all lived, in our own ways, the same life of selfish misery that we see all around us. No, God rescued us simply because He is merciful and kind. If God loved us this way despite our wickedness, certainly this kind of love can motivate us to respond in a similar way toward others who don't know Him!
- *“God has richly poured out His Spirit upon me” (vss. 5b,6).* God's Spirit gave us new life and a new nature the moment we turned to Christ. His Spirit now indwells us, to pour out God's love into our hearts (Romans 5:5), and to empower us to concretely communicate His love to people who are far from Him. All we need to do is present ourselves situationally to God as His instruments, and ask His Spirit to guide and empower us (see Romans 6:13). With such supernatural provision, showing others the kindness and forbearance and consideration that God has shown us can become an exciting adventure!

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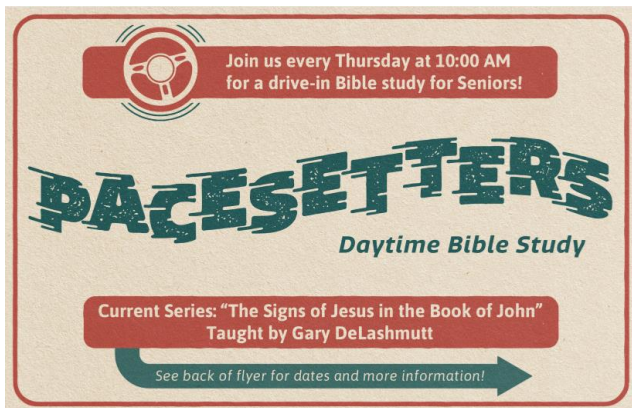
<sup>2</sup> “For” in vs. 3 explains the connection between how vss. 1,2 and vss. 3-7: It is the grace that God has shown us that motivates and empowers us to love non-Christians.



- “God has guaranteed me eternal life in His kingdom” (vs. 7). God has justified us – given us right standing before Him – as an undeserved gift. This right standing is the basis upon which God adopts us as His sons and daughters who are now heirs of the everlasting kingdom that He will bring when Jesus returns. Since we are confident that we will spend all eternity enjoying God’s kingdom, certainly we can represent Him well during the short time that we live in this fallen world! As Paul says elsewhere: “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18).

*Lord Jesus, I want to represent You well to those who are far from You – but this is beyond my ability. But thank You for rescuing me from a life of selfish misery. Thank You for showing me mercy when I deserved Your judgment, for sending Your Spirit to give me new life, and for giving me a secure future in Your eternal kingdom. Open the eyes of my heart today to be motivated and empowered by Your grace, so that I may give to others the love You have lavished upon me.*

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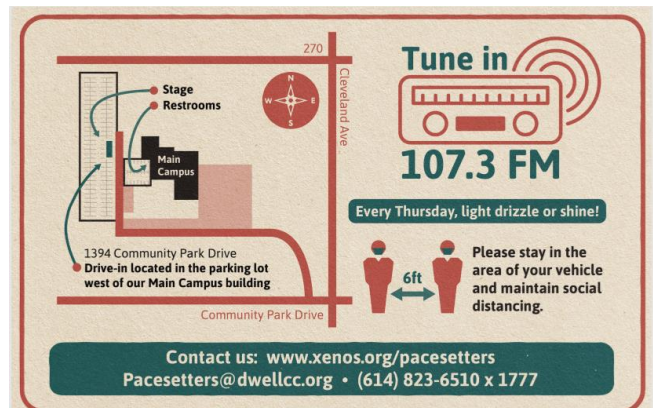


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