

4. Christian Citizens

9/21/2006

Not very long after the America realized what kind of effect the “Roe vs. Wade” Supreme Court decision had made to this country, a group of angry anti-abortionists decided that they would take the matters into their own hands. They started to harass the abortion doctors, set fire or bomb the abortion clinics even murdered the doctors who performed abortions in the name of rescuing unborn children.

To say this, am I against “Pro-Life” movement? Absolutely not. If you have been around me, you know where I stand for this issue. But I am clearly against killing the abortion doctors and bombing the Planned Parenthood clinics. Actually, it gives them fuel to push their agendas and terms that is favorable to them.

What should we do for this? Pray that these parents of innocent unborn children and the abortion doctors to realize that they are killing babies, not a blob of flesh. When they realize what they are doing and they become born-again Christians, they will not be any patient or doctor for abortion clinics and they will shut down the doors. Simple but many don’t pray this way.

The Bible does not teach civil disobedience. As a matter of fact, it teaches us to be in subjection to those in authority over us. Our role is to submit to our leaders, and to be good citizens, unless they order us to do something that directly contradicts the commandments of God, in which case we ought to obey God rather than men.

A. OBEDIENT AND KIND

Titus 3:1-3 Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, 2 to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. 3 For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

Christians were often looked on with suspicion in the Roman Empire because their conduct was so different and they met in private meetings for worship. It was important that they be good citizens without compromising the faith. Their pagan neighbors might disobey the law but Christians must submit to the authority of the state. Our heavenly citizenship does not make us excused from responsibilities as citizens on earth.

In the grammar of the ancient Greek text, ‘remind’ is in the present tense: “Go on reminding.” Titus was to constantly remind the Christians under his care to show proper respect and humility towards all people, particularly those in a position of authority.

If you have noticed, those who are hateful to the people tend to think that they are better than others. That is why they treat other people that way. If they were truly humble, they would treat others with respect instead of being hateful and stuck up.

V2 is a distinctively Christian kindness, coming not from simple good manners but from knowing who we are in Jesus.

Speaking of ‘speak no evil’ is about gossip. Many evil reports are passed from person to person without even a shred of evidence that the report is true. Another old saying is that some people will believe anything if it is whispered to them!

Since we are in this gossip subject, please be careful with forwarding e-mails that you didn't check validity of truth. Just because it was forwarded by your Christian friends, it doesn't mean that the source of that e-mail is true. Whether you believe or not Christians are notorious in exaggerating or making it sound so spiritual when it comes to e-mail.

A recent example of this kind of e-mail was about the Crocodile Hunter Steve Erwin who got killed by stingray poison. Somebody started to circulate an e-mail which claimed that Erwin committed his life to the Lord Jesus a few days before he died. It sounds so spiritual, but it is nothing more than a bogus claim. This was verified. So when you receive forwarded e-mails or chain e-mails, please check the source. If it is not true, do not allow it to go out of your e-mail system. If you do, it is no different than gossiping or spreading false rumor. We don't want to do either one of them.

Apostle Paul reminds us what we were like before Christ. Remembering where we once were shows us that the fallen nature is not so far from us, and we need constant reminding to stay where we should be in the Lord.

B. MERCY, REGENERATION, JUSTIFICATION AND GRACE OF GOD

Titus 3:4-8 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.

The more I read the letters from apostle Paul, the more I realize that this guys can write. He jam-packs mercy, love, the deity of Jesus Christ, depravity of man, salvation, infilling of the Holy Spirit, justification, eternal hope and grace of God in one sentence from v4-7.

Again, we find Paul remind us that our Savior Jesus Christ is God according to v4. Another great verses to remember when you talk with Jehovah's Witness: Titus 1:3, 2:13 and 3:4.

Justification is the gracious act of God whereby He declares a believing sinner righteous because of the finished work of Christ on the cross. God puts to our account the righteousness of His Son, so that we can be condemned no more. Not only does He forgive our sins, but He forgets that we were even sinners.

What is the result of this kindness, love, mercy and grace? Hope! We are heirs of God! This means that today we can draw on His riches. And when He comes, we will share His wealth and His kingdom forever. This hope ties in with Titus 2:13: "Looking for that blessed hope." What a deal we get from our God!

In v5, we see 'the washing of regeneration'. Those who believe in 'Baptismal Regeneration' use this verse to support their out-of-context theology. The ancient Greek word translated 'washing' here is connected with the spiritual cleansing of the believer by the Word of God through faith.

Ephesians 5:26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

C. STAYING IN THE COURSE

Titus 3:9-11 But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. 10 Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, 11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.

If you are like me, we can get distracted easily by many different things instead of what really matters. I go out to do some yard work and often end up doing something else, because I get distracted. Spiritually, that is what the devil wants us to do. Getting involved in not so important, often meaningless but time consuming thing would distract us from what matters to our Lord – such as, prayer and daily devotion, etc.

I am sure you can count at least couple of people who would love to argue with anyone for the sake of arguing when it comes to theology. They get really excited, sometimes even down right getting mad especially when they are losing the argument, but going no where except them trying to show off how spiritual they are. Actually, those who argue for the sake of their pride is very immature and need to be controlled first by themselves or the elders of the church.

The Jewish Rabbis spent their time building up imaginary genealogies for the characters of the Old Testament. It is much easier for them to discuss endless genealogies than to be kind and considerate and helpful at home, or efficient and diligent and honest at work.

We wish we did not have “problem people” in our churches. But wherever there are people, there can be problems. In this case, Paul warned Titus to avoid people who like to argue about the unimportant things of the faith.

I heard news about having an interfaith gathering for the five year memorial service of 9/11 in Tucson a few days ago. Our church would not get involved with any of these kinds of gathering at all. I can understand getting together for interdenominations among evangelical churches. But we will never share a gathering with other faith – such as Buddhists, Mormons, Muslims and others. Over my dead body.

Titus must take measures against those who insist on going their own way. Their self-will makes them self-condemned. If more churches would follow this principle, we would have fewer “church trouble makers” who cause problems in various churches.

Titus 3:12-15 When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. 13 Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing. 14 And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful. 15 All who are with me greet you.

Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

From this small size dynamic letter from the aging apostle Paul to his spiritual son Titus, I believe that we have learned a lot.

D. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Speak evil of no one, be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.
- 2) Avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless.