

John Maxwell is one of these guys who has written many books and given many seminars on leadership in the church. A quote that I like of his is:

"When it comes to change, there are three seasons of timing: People change when they hurt enough that they have to, when they learn enough that they want to, and when they receive enough that they are able to."

The apostle Paul's letter to Titus sets forth the qualifications for godly leaders (the elders) in the church of Jesus Christ. The apostle left Titus on the island of Crete so that he would "set things in order that remains, and appoint elders in every city." Paul then went on to list the spiritual qualifications for eldership.

This morning... as we conclude his letter to Titus... we see some of what their role is. Elders are "agents of change" reminding the church of certain things that work in all three ways John Maxwell cited. *"People change when they hurt enough that they have to, when they learn enough that they want to, and when they receive enough that they are able to."*

The Need For Elders... is **#1. To Remind Us How To Live In An Ungodly Society.** *People change when they learn enough that they want to.*

Titus 3:1-3

Here Paul instructs Titus to remind his flock... first of all... to submit to and obey everyone in authority over them.

Do I really need to remind you... that at this time... the Roman Empire was ruled by **Nero**... one of the cruelest Caesars ever... who would soon bring havoc to the Christian church...? Despite that... however... Paul's

instructions are... "*Be subject... submit yourselves as Christians... under that rule... and do it voluntarily...(actually choose to do it.)*"

Some segments of the Jewish nation were seething in insurrection against the Roman Empire at this time. ... One group... the Zealots... vowed to submit to no king but Yahweh. ... They refused to pay taxes... and went about the country... murdering and assassinating in an effort to make civil government impossible. ... The Cretans... likewise... detested the Roman government. ... One of the church fathers wrote, "*Cretans are notoriously turbulent, quarrelsome, opposing all authority, involved in insurrection and murder . . .*"

How are Christians to respond to such a government? ... The apostles Paul and Peter have left clear instructions concerning the Christian's place in the community. There is no authority except from God... and those authorities that exist are established by God. The Roman government... in this context... was ordained of God as an instrument to save the world from chaos. The Christian's job was to help the government accomplish its task of justice... order and peace... not to hinder it. ... Christians are to avail of the resultant time of peace to spread the gospel. While there are times when Christians are to obey God rather than man... (and we know there are consequences for those decisions)... generally speaking... they are to accept all power and authority in life as from the Lord.

Christians . . . obey authority... even a bad government.

Then Paul exhorts Christians to "be ready for every good deed." That seems to be the theme of this letter. It agrees with Ephesians 2:8-10

Ephesians 2:8-10 (ESV)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

In Acts 10:38... speaking of Jesus of Nazareth... Peter says... "*You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power and how he went about doing good . . .*" ... What a wonderful testimony we have in our community when we were known as men and women who always seem to be doing good... as Jesus did.

"Speak evil of no one"... that means – whether it is true information or not... do not try to hurt others... by what you say. We are to be "uncontentious" – not quarreling. ...(This does not mean Christians are not to stand up for justice... Rather... in keeping within the context of what Paul is telling Titus here... we should do so within the established rules of the governing authority.) ... And he further explains... We are to be "gentle"... (This word literally means in the Greek... "showing a sweet reasonableness"... so we are to be forbearing... having "every consideration for all men"... in other words... being meek... which is strength under the control of the Holy Spirit. ...

The church needs elders... to remind it how to live in an ungodly society. There are two basic qualities mentioned here... that we should be known for. ... We are to obey authority... and we are to show perfect courtesy to everyone.

But (Listen...) The only possible way for us to obey authority... and to show perfect courtesy... the way we are instructed to do it... is by remembering something else that is extremely important. It is expressed in five simple words: "*For we ourselves once were...*"

Paul identifies himself fully with the incorrigible... rude... and far-from-God Cretans in the words, "*For we ourselves once were . . .*" ... Paul never forgot who he was before Jesus Christ met him on the Damascus road. ... He identified with those who were struggling in darkness... sin... shame and guilt. In this way... Paul is a great example to us... not to look at our government or our neighbors in a judgmental way... but to remember what God has done for us... and then behave in ways that demonstrate mercy... love... and patience... the very qualities that we now have... through the mercy of God... that **we did not earn**... nor could we **ever** earn for ourselves.

Paul reviews... in an un-self-righteous way... several sinful characteristics of the Cretans... that he once shared. ... "We were foolish" (senseless)... "disobedient" (hard-hearted)... "led astray"... or "deceived" (by the power of the great deceiver... the prince of this world)... "enslaved to various passions and pleasures" (hedonistic)... "spending our life in malice... and envy... hateful... and hating one another."

When Paul says **we lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another**, he paints an even darker and more damning picture of our former life of unbelief and disobedience. ... He names some of the sins of the human heart... that are so prevalent... and produce such a bitter... and destructive harvest... in people's lives and relationships. We lived in:

- **malice and envy**, nurturing aggressive attitudes to others that were fed by personal jealousies and ambitions;
- **being hated** by others for the same reasons because they too are exploiting others for their own ends;
- **hating one another** as a way of life that knows nothing of the reconciling and pacifying grace of God.

Paul identified himself (and us)...with the Cretans. So... let me ask you something... When you turn on the News in recent days... and you see mobs of crazy people... protesting... rioting... and looting... who look so senseless... hard-heartedly disobedient... deceived... enslaved to their passions... full of envy... and hate – **does it disgust you?** ... It does me.

But if Paul identified himself (and us) with such a disgusting group of his own day... isn't the implication that we should so identify with those who appall us when we turn on the television news...? ... The way Paul describes the Cretans... are the very words I would use to describe what we are seeing today... with so many of our nation's protest movements. (Senseless... hard-hearted... deceived... enslaved to their passions... full of envy... and hate.)

"For we ourselves once were . . ."

Let's go to the next verse in our Titus passage... Titus 3... verse 4...

"But" – OK... stop!

Underline that word, "but." It is the most exciting word in the whole New Testament... because it signifies the change in God's heart toward man... who was rebelling against Him... and walking away from Him. "But . . ."

But... He sent His Son... "but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared... in other words... when the goodness of God's heart expressed itself in action. ... Only the Living God could do this. He is not like the fickle Roman and Greek gods. He is the Creator in Whom all goodness and truth finds its source. ... If we really understood that... our lives would be radically different.

The Need For Elders... is **#1. To Remind Us How To Live In An Ungodly Society.** We are to obey authority... and we are to show perfect courtesy to everyone. The way to do this is by remembering what we once were... and also remembering something else... Elders are needed to make sure that we do.

The Need For Elders... is **#2. To Remind Us Of The Kindness Of God Our Savior.** *People change when they learn enough that they want to. And people change when they receive enough that they are able to.*

Titus 3:4-7

What a difference "the goodness and loving kindness of God" has made! If you want a beautiful illustration of "the goodness and loving kindness of God"... (let me encourage you to) read 2 Samuel and note David's treatment of Mephibosheth, a little lame prince. ... Because Mephibosheth was a part of the former King's family... (Saul! Who had chased David for years seeking to kill him)... and because he was crippled and crippled

people in ancient times did not have much worth... it was not much of an assumption to think Mephibosheth would be slain. ... But... to everyone's surprise... David... in kindness... spared him and treated him as one of his own sons at the palace table. ... This is a perfect example of God's goodness and loving kindness toward you and I.

(Look!)... In reality... all of us should be going to hell... because we have all sinned against God. But – He saved us!

Titus 3:5

No words could express more succinctly... the totally undeserved nature of salvation... since God is the one who gives salvation to us... on the basis of His mercy alone. ... We are the ones who receive it in spite of our being destitute of God-pleasing lives. This is salvation by grace alone.

We did not save ourselves - "He saved us." ... How did He do it? ... Through the absolute miracle of the new birth... the work of the Holy Spirit of God.

"He saved us . . . by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit." ... God offered us salvation in such a way... that we who were **dead** in our trespasses and sins... who had no ability to make the choice... were awakened in our spirits... We **first** had to be regenerated... so that we could hear the Word of God.

Ephesians 2:1 says... "*and you were dead in your trespasses and sins.*" Dead means – completely incapable of responding to ANY stimuli. Go to the morgue... and prick a dead man with a pin... and see if he responds.

Tickle his feet or use the strongest taser at full strength on him. Will he respond...? No! Why...? Because he's dead.

Now... since we were spiritually dead... we first had to be spiritually regenerated. Otherwise we cannot respond to ANY kind of spiritual stimulation. ... But the Holy Spirit was poured out on us... which regenerated us... and now... for the first time... we had a choice to accept Jesus Christ into our hearts and repent of our sins. The Holy Spirit had to flood our hearts (be richly poured out) in order for all this to happen.

The next time some well-intentioned Christian who says they believe in the "Full-Gospel" tells you that you need to pray for a filling of the Holy Spirit after you have been saved... and they try to make you believe that He doesn't come automatically when you are saved... you point him/her to this passage (Titus 3:4-7.) He is poured out on us richly... we see here... in order to save us!

Not only does the Holy Spirit wash and regenerate God's people once for all in the new birth... He also continually renews us inwardly. The word for "renewal" indicates an ongoing activity... rather than one that has stopped. This is because the new birth does not make the believer sinless... it makes us holy. We must allow the Spirit to be constantly renewing our thoughts... purifying our affections... and inclining our will toward holy and heavenly things.

So... (who are Christians) have been washed and regenerated by this rich out-pouring... and we are continually being renewed. But notice something else... we have also been *justified* (Titus 3:7). This wonderful doctrine is

discussed in detail in Romans 3:21-8:39. Justification is the gracious act of God whereby He declares a believing sinner righteous. ... God puts to our account... the righteousness of His Son... so that we can be condemned no more. ... Not only does He forget our sins... but He forgets that we were even sinners!

What is the result of this kindness, love, mercy, and grace? ... a Blessed Hope! ... We are heirs of God!

But there is something more involved: We should live godly lives and be "careful to maintain good works"

Titus 3:8

The only evidence the unsaved world has that we belong to God is our godly lives.

"Good works" do not necessarily mean religious works or church work. ...It is fine to work at church... bring delightful goodies for fellowship hour... and hold an office... ... But it is also good to serve our unsaved neighbors... to be helpful in the community... and to have a reputation for assisting those in need. ... Baby-sitting to relieve a harassed young mother is just as much a spiritual work as passing out a Gospel tract. The best way a local church has to witness to the lost is through the sacrificial service of its members.

The result of this new life in Christ and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit is that we should live a godly life in a godless society.

The Need For Elders... is **#1. To Remind Us How To Live In An Ungodly Society.**

The Need For Elders... is **#2. To Remind Us Of The Kindness Of God Our Savior.**

3. The Need For Elders is... **To Remind Us To Engage In Good Deeds**

Titus 3:8-11

While good works are profitable... these things are not. They are a waste of time.

The Need For Elders... is **#4. To Protect the Church from “Problem People.”**

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 have learned that professed Christians who like to argue about unimportant things in the faith... are usually covering up some sin in their lives... are very insecure... and are usually unhappy at work or at home.

But there is another kind of problem person we should deal with... the one who makes a choice... to cause divisions." ... This is a self-willed person who thinks he is right... and who goes from person to person in the church... forcing people to make a choice. "Are you for *me* or are you for *Pastor Fred?*" ... This is a work of the flesh. It is was Paul called in Philippians "a party spirit." "Are you with us... or with them...?" ... Such a person should be admonished at least twice, and then rejected. The purpose is to bring them to repentance... by seeing that God hates

divisiveness and has directed His church to respond to it. (Here is John Maxwell's third element.) *People change when they hurt enough.*

Titus 3:12-15

In these closing verses, Paul conveyed some personal information to Titus, and reminded him of the main theme of the letter: Insist that God's people "learn to devote themselves to doing what is good".

We know nothing about Artemas; Tychicus we met in Acts 20:4. He was with Paul in his first Roman imprisonment and carried the epistles from Paul to the Ephesians (Eph. 6:21), the Colossians (Col. 4:7-8), and to Philemon (cf. Col. 4:7-9 with Phile. 10). Either Artemas or Tychicus would replace Titus on Crete, and then Titus was to join Paul at Nicopolis.

It is possible that Zenas and Apollos (see Acts 18:24ff; Titus 3:13) carried this letter to Titus. Paul had sent them on a mission and Titus was to aid them all he could.

Paul ended the letter to Titus with "Grace be with you all."

Grace—and good works! They go together!

The church of Jesus Christ on the island of Crete... as well as His church in every nation... and every generation since Pentecost... until Christ's second appearing... needs Godly Elders... appointed by the Holy Spirit to:

Remind Us How To Live In An Ungodly Society.

Remind Us Of The Kindness Of God Our Savior.

Remind Us To Engage In Good Deeds.

Protect the Church from “Problem People.”