

“NO ONE... ALL MEN”

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Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. Titus 3:1-2

*“... to speak evil of no one
... to show perfect courtesy (meekness) toward all people”*

So, as Paul is directed Titus to teach the Christians in the churches of Crete, when he writes “no one” and “all people”, it sounds like that covers every single person that we meet.

Really, would that include people like Hitler? Kim Jong Un? Our ungodly next door neighbor?

How about Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian conqueror whose army committed horrible atrocities as he completed the siege of Jerusalem and slaughtered many of the friends and family of Daniel, and consigned Daniel himself to a life of slavery as a eunuch? (2 Chron. 36:17, Is. 39:7, Dan. 1:9-10)

Listen to Daniel’s reply as he responded to Nebuchadnezzar regarding the dream that the king had about himself being banished to a time of insanity:

Beltshazzar (Daniel) answered and said, “My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies! Daniel 4:19

Notice the response of Nebuchadnezzar after he emerged from his time living as an animal outdoors:

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble. Daniel 4:37

Daniel had created a personal environment of caring for the man who had slaughtered his own countrymen, so that when the Lord reached out to the heart of Nebuchadnezzar, the king was able to interpret God’s efforts in his life properly, in the context of love that Daniel had provided in the king’s presence.

We are to speak evil of “no one.” This word translated “speak evil” is the Greek word *blasphēmeō*. You may recognize this as “blaspheme”, a word we usually think of in reference to the attitudes of people that disrespect God or his son Jesus. This word is also used in Jude verse 9:

But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you."

Michael did not presume to blaspheme Satan himself!

So, Christians are commanded by God here in Titus chapter 3 to blaspheme (also translated "slander") NO ONE.

Slander, like any other sin, always begins in the heart. So, in this particular context, Paul instructed Titus to make sure the Christian's view of his fellow man is rooted in God's perspective, as he went on in the next verses:

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

We may think to ourselves, "I've never hated other people, even before I was a Christian!"

Well, let's think about the word "hate" in the vernacular of heaven: Hate is foregoing our responsibility to love!

*We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.
1 John 3:14-16*

Side note: when did we first lay down our lives in the service of God as Christians? (at the moment of baptism, when we were crucified with Christ — "it is no longer I who live"; when we personally cast Satan from his place as our accuser in heaven — "for they loved not their own lives even to death" Gal. 2:20, Rev. 12:11)

John went on to describe "heavenly" love, that is in contrast to our secular view of love: this love is "proactive" towards others, not just in words of love only, but in perspectives and actions towards them. We may protest: John is speaking of our love towards our Christian brethren! It certainly starts there... but we are reminded in Romans 5:8 that God demonstrated His own love towards us in that while we yet sinners, Christ died for us. This scripture in Titus 3:1ff clarifies our role in God's army, as he battles Satan in the hearts of the unbelievers who surround us.

So, how does slander begin in our hearts?

It begins with a false appraisal of our fellow man, whether our brethren or unbelievers.

Did you know that we can slander someone with the truth about them?

We do so when we take some truthful appraisal of another's sin or weakness, and we make that our "theme" as we view that person, failing to graciously appraise the whole person.

In the context of the "problem" between Euodia and Syntyche in Philippi, what did Paul teach the Christians in that church?

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Phil 3:8

Daniel had the wisdom to recognize the potential of Nebuchadnezzar, in spite of his brutal, narcissistic attitudes. Daniel, as a servant of Jehovah and of Nebuchadnezzar, kept a proper perspective towards the monarch so that he could serve the purposes of God in the king's heart.

And, how do each of us wish for God to see us? If we are honest with ourselves, we recognize our own weaknesses that fall short of the glory of God. Those sins may go on for years, acknowledged but not fully conquered. Do we as Christians want our Father to see us solely through the lens of the reality of our sins, or do we want him to see us as a whole person, who serves him and seeks his approval, despite our failings? If we are honest, we desire that he will lavish his grace upon us, even as his flawed servants.

So, here is the perspective of Titus 3:4f. He lavished his grace upon us:

... but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy...

In view of God's own gracious loving appraisal of our potential, even in our sins, as soldiers in his army, shall we not take up the battle on his terms, and be loving, full of grace and mercy towards our fellow man?

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 2 Cor. 4:3,4

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Eph. 6:12

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy

strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ. 2 Cor.10:3-5