



“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine,” Titus 2:1.

Diligent Service: Sustenance

Covenant: We engage therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit . . . to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines.

Aim: To emphasize that it is the believer’s privilege to sustain the teachings of Christ—and to inaugurate teachings

Text: Titus 3:1-11, 14

INTRODUCTION — The Christian shares in God’s government of the church. His place is “to sustain the worship, ordinances, disciplines, and doctrines” which God place in the church.

In the American government there are three bodies: one to make the law, one to interpret the law, and one to enforce the law. We call these three bodies the congressional, judicial, and executive branches. To which of these does the believer belong in God’s government? It is not his place to make the law, for God has already done that. It is not his place to judge others by the law, for God reserves that authority to Himself. Neither is it his place to enforce the law upon others, for God alone has executive powers. The believer is called upon to propagate God’s truths so that others may know them. In so doing he is to remain faithful to the revelation exactly as God gave it.

This is a great responsibility for it includes the entire world. With the population explosion there are now more people in the world who are unsaved than there were during New Testament days. Statisticians estimate that unless Christianity grows much, much more rapidly than it has in previous generations that the percent of the world population which calls itself “Christian” will drop from the present twenty percent to two percent by the next thirty years.

Christians can meet this challenge only by the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Today's study should put us on our knees to claim His power. We pledged ourselves to this when we joined a Baptist church and entered into covenant with our fellow members.

EXPOSITION

I. REASONABLE REQUIREMENTS, 2:1.

The Christian who serves God faithfully in church relationships must have two primary qualifications. First, he must give a positive Christian witness. Paul commanded Titus, **“Speak thou.”** Witnessing for Christ is not the task of the preacher or teacher alone. Read the book of The Acts of the Apostles and observe what a large place witnessing had in the life of the early church. Jesus said to them, **“Ye shall be witnesses unto me,”** Acts 1:8, and the church took this as their theme, **“We are his witnesses of these things,”** Acts 5:32. The church must never lose this sense of stewardship in witnessing.

The second requirement of the church member is that his witness conform to the true doctrine given of God. Paul commanded Titus, **“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.”** All teaching must be measured by the Word of God. Compare Acts 17:11 and Isaiah 8:20. Paul warned the Galatians, **“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed,”** Galatians 1:8. Zeal for true doctrine should mark every believer. Haste in abandoning the false should likewise mark them. Every Christian knowing and loyally propagating the revealed truth of God—this is the grand ideal. Such an obligation rests upon every member of each Baptist church because of the Covenant agreement “to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines.”

II. SUGGESTED METHODS, 3:1.2, 9-11.

How can the believer measure up to the ideal for each church member? Here are six suggestions given by the Apostle Paul which are applicable today.

1. Respect established authority, verse 1. The church is never promoted when torn with internal strife and dissention. Anarchy reigns in a church only when Satan has gained control of some members. This blasphemes the work of God. Thus the Apostle says, **“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God . . . Obey**

them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls . . . Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints,” Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24.

This does not mean that the pastor or the deacons are the “boss” of the church. It does mean that those in positions of leadership should be respected, “whose faith follow,” Hebrews 13:7c. Many a person has been driven from the church by members who gossiped about the church leaders. This should never be.

2. Stay ready to serve, verse 1. **“To be ready to every good work,”** simply means to be always ready to serve in any place where the Lord opens the door. Opportunity in the Lord's service is to be welcomed gladly. The work is to be done heartily, as unto the Lord and not unto men, since we serve the Lord Jesus Christ, Colossians 3:23.

“The true workman never shirks when the overseer is not by . . . There is a work that is mean and pitiful; all grudging unwilling toil, all 'scrimped' work, fair to the eye but second rate in reality, is mean and pitiful . . . it is forced and unwelcome and as badly done as possible.” — M. A. Lewis. This does not sound like work done for the glory of God, does it?

What is your attitude when opportunities to serve are offered you? Have you accepted a teaching responsibility? Have you joyfully entered into visitation? Have you been faithful in prayer? Have you faithfully supported the church by giving your tithes and offerings? All this should be considered by one who is “ready to every good work,”

3. Control your tongue, verse 2a. One can uphold and carry forward the work of the church by abstaining from contentions and arguments. The book of James has a very excellent discussion on the Christian and his tongue in 3:1-18. He says also, **“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain,”** 1:26. Control of the tongue is evidence of Christian maturity.

Everyone has faults. If one looks carefully and critically, he can find a flaw in the leadership and in the membership of the church. This is not why we are in the church together. We are here to strengthen and help and uplift. If you desire to be a worthy member, be careful what you permit your tongue to say. The talk of the church should be on one subject: **“That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,”** Romans 15:6. This is the best use one could possibly make of his speech.

4. Keep the right spirit, verse 2b. Gentleness and meekness are two qualities Paul recommends for the church member. Gentleness has been defined as “sweet reasonableness.” It is the opposite to the spirit of harsh

domination which seeks to control others. It is manifest in the brother who is willing to take less than he has the right to require if thereby a brother's welfare will be served. Gentleness is not an external appearance but an inner grace wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, Galatians 5:22. The church is strengthened by such a spirit.

Meekness, on the other hand, refers to contrition of spirit before God. It is related to humility, being humility born of trustful submission to God. It results in a gentle, forgiving unselfishness toward others. William Barclay says meekness is no "spineless gentleness," but while gentleness is there, behind it is the strength of steel! How the church is strengthened by men and women who have the twin spirits of gentleness and meekness. These are the qualities your church needs to see in her members. Do you manifest them?

5. Live in peace, verse 9. Peace is a blessed relationship between brethren. The Christian is admonished to follow peace with all men, Hebrews 12:14. While the times come when one must stand up against error, he must be sure that he opposes Satan and not another brother in Christ. Never should believers be guilty of striving against one another. A faithful witness for the truth of the Gospel is much more effective than arguments about religion. No profit comes from such discussions but they are "unprofitable and vain."

Brethren in the church must be careful about correcting one another. Paul says to receive the weak brother into the fellowship, but not to argue with him about his weaknesses, Romans 14:1. The strong should bear with the infirmities of the weak so as to build them up in the Lord, Romans 15:1-2. This is not to suggest we condone any heresy or error in practice, but that we keep the spirit of Christ in all relationships. The church where members pray for one another and edify one another is a strong church and will be effective in her work for the Lord. Is this the kind of church with which you are associated? Are you that kind of a member?

6. Keep clear of heresy, verses 10-11. Heresy is any belief which is contrary to the Bible. A heretic is a person who holds such a belief, refusing to accept the true doctrine of the Word of God. The Christian should seek to witness to and win people who are in such error. Yet, there is a limit to which the witness is to go.

Paul said, **"A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject,"** verse 10. Observe, however, that admonition is to be given. Only when an admonition is refused and the heart is closed to the truth should the heretic be rejected. But if he "does refuse to hear the truth it is evidence that he is "subverted" — a term meaning "turned inside out." Persistence in trying to win such an one is useless. God says, and should not

be done by believers. It will not be of any value but will only waste time, energy and opportunity to be witnessing to someone who will respond.

Jesus warns, **“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you,”** Matthew 7:6. The church is not a debating society where false doctrines may be aired, but is a lighthouse from which the message of Jesus may be given to a community. Don't waste time with the hardened heretic but keep on spreading the witness of Jesus. Sound advice, isn't it?

III. SACRED MOTIVES, 3:3-8, 14.

What motivates the believer to invest time and money to “sustain the worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines” of the church? The answer is not to be found in man nor the congregation of men, but in God. In the true Christian life, the motive for all service is the relationship of the believer with God.

1. Redemption by God, verse 3. What a change salvation has made! The person without understanding, disobedient, uncompliant, detestable, living in the bitter spirit of malice and envy is changed. The change is like being born again into a new life. It is like being raised from among the dead to live a new life. It is salvation by repentance and faith in Jesus.

This is the key to all Christian service. Neither duty nor reward motivates one like the sense of redemption. In the crucifixion, Jesus died for all. **“And that he died for all that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again,”** II Corinthians 5:15. Christian service underlies God's purpose in redemption, **“For we are his workmanship, fulfilled in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them,”** Ephesians 2:10. Why should the Christian invest time, talents and finances in the work of the church? Because God has saved him and committed this work to him. That is reason enough, isn't it?

2. Revelation of God, verses 4-6. Observe the amazing grace manifest by God. When we were “foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another,” God manifest His “kindness and love” toward us! Read Romans 5:6, 8, 10 for the fuller statement of His grace. When we were “without strength,” “sinners,” and “enemies,” Christ died for us. **“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God,”** I John 3:1. Behold, indeed!

Jesus revealed to us the kindness and love of God, but not that only. He also revealed God's way of salvation by grace through faith. Man needed to be saved. God came in the person of Jesus to save man. How did He accomplish the deed? Paul says two things.

(1) Salvation is not by “works of righteousness which we have done.” That is, it is not by any deed, ritual or ordinance performed by men. What you do cannot save yourself. What another man does for you cannot save you. Paul rather says that the man who tries to be saved works will be held responsible for absolute obedience and so condemned, Romans 4:1-4.

(2) Salvation is a work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. “. . . **according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost,**” verse 5. Regeneration is an inner recreating of fallen human nature by the gracious sovereign action of the Holy Spirit, John 3:5-8. This is accomplished, according to Paul, by the “renewing of the Holy Spirit.” The Spirit, in the redemptive deed, makes the sinner new by restoring the relationship with God which sin destroyed. Salvation is always a work of the Spirit. It is never an accomplishment of man. So the redeemed sinner is eternally grateful for God's merciful dealings with him and is inspired to serve Him forever. Is this what salvation means to you?

3. Transformation In God, verse 7. Justification changes the relation of the sinner with God. Instead of being His enemy, the penitent believer is changed into a loving child of God. In justification the believer is both declared and made righteousness. This is not merely an external appearance before men, but an internal reality before God.

This transformation is not temporary. It is eternal since what God does is done in the light of eternity, Ecclesiastes 3:14. So He provides an eternal redemption through Grace. This is why the believer is safe in grace, because he has received an eternal redemption, John 5:24. What higher motive could one have for Christian service?

4. Working for God, verse 8. Both God and men expect the believer to produce good works. A professed believer who lives in sin will hear unbelievers sneer, “I thought he was supposed to be a Christian.” Yes, even the unsaved world expects the Christian to live worthy of his profession.

Those born anew in redemption enter into a solemn obligation before God whereby they oblige themselves to a new and holy life. So the Christian should “be careful” (that is “give diligence,” or “make it his study”) to maintain a life of holiness. This testimony is more impressive than all the serious arguments reason could lay before the heart of a sinner. How the believer lives before his former associates in sin will make much difference. If a man loves God he will delight to show forth His Spirit in worthy

conduct.

Good works are important. They will never save a soul, Romans 4:1--5. Yet, they give proof before the world that one is truly saved. The faith which does not produce a changed life will not save the soul. Read James: 2:14-26. Saving faith makes such a difference in one's relationship with God that it makes a difference in his life also.

5. Bearing fruit for God, verse 14. **“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples,”** John 15:8. The purpose of salvation is that the believer might produce fruit to the glory of God. **“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain . . .”** John 15:16. This is God's purpose in saving any man.

The Apostle Peter gives specific instruction how to bear fruit for God. It begins with growth in Christian graces: faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, II Peter 1:5-7. Then he adds, **“For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you, that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ,”** II Peter 1:8. Would to God that every church member might have these graces in abundance that the Father might be glorified in the abundance of fruit which was produced in His name.

CONCLUSION—To unite with a Baptist church is to subscribe to its Covenant. One person of that Covenant obligates the member to “sustain the worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines” of the church. Are you keeping faithful to that commitment? No problem should hinder devotion and loyalty to God, His Word, and His church. One way to sustain the church is by faithful financial stewardship as next week's study will reveal.

QUESTIONS

1. What portion of the Covenant is considered today?
2. What are the church ordinances? discipline?
3. How can we sustain them?
4. How can we sustain her worship and doctrines?
5. What authority has the church to give out new doctrines? Explain.
6. How does Galatians 1:8 relate to this subject?
7. What motivates a Christian to serve?
8. Why should service be through the church?
9. How does II Peter 1:5-8 relate to this study?
10. How does this lesson relate to next week's study?

