



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

### **Diligent Service: Sustenance**

**Aim:** To emphasize that it is the believer's privilege to sustain the teachings of Christ—not to inaugurate teachings.

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

Text: Titus 3:1-11, 14.

INTRODUCTION—The Baptist church member has been instructed with a great responsibility in the work. As a redeemed child of God he is an ambassador for Christ, II Corinthians 5:19-20. Last Sunday's lesson pointed out the importance of promotion of that work. However, promotion does not mean the inauguration of new teachings. Today, the study stresses that the loyal Baptist is to sustain the teachings which God has given. The American government is composed of three bodies: one to make law, one to interpret laws, and one to enforce laws. In God's government the Christian has “no judicial powers—neither authority to inaugurate new laws. His purpose is to support, defend and propagate the teachings which God has already given. God's laws are eternally valid and there is no need to change them. There is something wrong with a religion which does not use the Word of God as the sole guide in doctrines and practice!

The portion of the Church Covenant studied today obligates the Baptist member “by the aid of the Holy Spirit . . . to sustain its (the church's) worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines.” This lesson will be profitably studied if the reader will prayerfully dedicate himself to the blessed task of supporting God's work through his church.

### **EXPOSITION**

## **I. The Grand Ideal, 2:1.**

Christians should be spokesmen for God. The personal element is set out by Paul's imperative statement, "Speak thou." Witnessing for Christ is not the task of the preacher and teacher alone. Every believer can share this most rewarding ministry. However, the Christian should be careful to speak only what is in accord with truth. True doctrine alone should be believed and encouraged. Paul warned the Galatians that even if an angel from heaven came with any other doctrine, let him be accursed,' Galatians 1:8. All teaching should be measured by the Word of God, Acts 17:11. That which matches the teachings of the Bible should be zealously supported. That which contradicts the Bible should be hastily abandoned. The grand ideal is: Every Christian knowing and loyally supporting the revealed truth of God.

## **II. The Suggested Method, 3:1-2, 9-11.**

How can the believer measure up to the ideal mentioned above? Paul continues the discussion to Titus by giving certain suggestions. They are:

1. Be in humble subjection to ordained authority. "*Be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates,*" verse 1. When anarchy reigns in a church the work of God is blasphemed! A church fuss does injury to its witness. Rebellion against ordained authority never sustains the church's worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. Law-breaking church members are a curse, not a blessing.

2. Always be ready to serve. "*To be ready to every good work,*" verse 1b. Submission to one's leaders will go on to a loyal acceptance and execution of each specific deed. M. A. Lewis has written, "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." On the contrary, the Christian is to welcome gladly opportunity to do any good work for the glory of God!

3. Keep the tongue under control "*To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers,*" verse 2a. Abstaining from contentions and arguments in the church supports its ministry. James says that the man who does not control his tongue has a vain (empty, worthless) religion, James 1:17. It is a mature man who can control his words and that man can expect the blessings of God, James 3:2-13. Blessed is the church whose members are Christian in speech!

4. Be gentle in spirit. "*Be gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men,*"

verse 2b. Gentleness can be translated “sweet reasonableness.” It is the contrary to that harsh domination which one ambitious of control is apt to exercise. It speaks of one willing to take less than his rights for the welfare of his brother. This is not merely an outward attitude, but an inner grace of the soul which is wrought by the Spirit of God. This is a gentle meekness before God and men. Such supports the church!

5. Do not strive. “But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain,” verse 9. Arguments and questions concerning matters of secondary importance will do more harm than good. No profit comes from such exercise and the end is vanity (emptiness, uselessness). The Christian should strive against Satan to the advancement of the church. Never should he be guilty of striving against his brethren in the work of the Lord. Even religious arguments are unprofitable in contrast to a faithful witness for the truth of God revealed in the Gospel.

6. Do not engage in useless work, verses 10-11. A heretic is one who refuses to accept true doctrine as revealed in the Word of God. He wants to select what he believes. Thus, he is subverted (literally, “turned inside out”). The very opinions which he holds serve to condemn him and he puts himself beyond redemption. The Christian should not spend his time trying to win such a person when others will respond to the Gospel appeal. Persisting in the work which God says is useless will profit nothing. It is a waste of time, energy, and opportunity. Under God's Spirit the church member can find his place of service where he will support the church and glorify God. To do otherwise is to cast pearls before the swine—to waste precious things by investing them where they will be unappreciated and unproductive.

### **III. The Higher Motive, 3:3-8, 14.**

1. God has redeemed us from the former condition under sin, verse 3. Those who were formerly without understanding, disobedient, uncompliant, detestable, living in malice and envy toward one another, have now been changed! This change has come by the resurrection to spiritual life through redemption by Jesus Christ. The change of regeneration delivers one from Satanic influence into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Redemption is ample motive to encourage loyalty to God and His church.

2. God has given a wonderful revelation of Himself, verses 4-6. This revelation was given through Jesus Christ, John 1:14, 17-18. It is a clear exhibition of God's loving-kindness when redemption was provided without

deeds of men but by the perfect mercy of our Saviour. This revelation has provided a regeneration which is accomplished by the Holy Spirit who washes (looses) the sinner from his sin. Redemption is the holiest motive to Christian service. Because one is born of God, washed from his sins, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, filled with the love of God, and given eternal life, he is qualified and inspired to holy service through the church.

3. Man is eternally transformed by grace, verse 7. This transformation comes by justification unto righteousness. Justification is the act of God by which the penitent believer is put into right relation with God. In justification the sinner is both made and declared to be righteous. The righteousness which he comes to possess is not an external conforming to legal codes of conduct. It is an internal reality in which the believer is given the righteousness of God. This transformation is not temporary, but rather makes the believer an heir of eternal life. It is an eternal redemption which is provided through the grace of God. What God does He does for eternity. Salvation is an eternal condition bestowed through Jesus Christ in return for repentance and faith by the sinner. The one thus saved is eternally redeemed and free from condemnation, John 5:24. To receive this grace and fail to support the work of God through the church would be the grossest perversion of God's purposes in man.

4. The redeemed bear a concern for the welfare of others, verse 8. The production of good works by the redeemed is expected by both God and men. Those born anew in redemption enter into a solemn covenant with God where they oblige themselves to a new and holy life. Moreover, the Christian is to "be careful" ("make it their study") to maintain such a holy conduct. Thus the child of God is to stand out in the purity of his life and the selflessness of his actions. Such a life of service to God is expressed in deeds of loving-kindness toward men, I John 3:17-18. The very love which exists in men's hearts is in response to the Divine love which God first showed toward us, I John 4:9-11. It has been put into the believer's heart by the Holy Spirit, Romans 5:5. Therefore, to serve others (especially through the church) is to serve God!

5. The redeemed yearn to be fruitful to the glory of God, verse 14. Christian brethren should give most careful attention to their lives. The life of great fruitfulness is the life that glorifies God, John 15:8. This fruitfulness is expressed not only in supplying needs of the brethren, but also in cultivating Christian graces (love, faith, sympathy, etc.) in the heart by deeds of kindness. Peter sets up a ladder of growth in grace. He shows Christians should cultivate faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, II Peter 1:5-9. These will produce a life of

faithfulness in whose deeds God will be glorified and the church sustained in its ministry. Unfruitfulness is an evidence of one's distance from God, II Peter 1:9. How is your life counting for God through your church? Read Ephesians 3:21.

CONCLUSION—To unite with a Baptist church is to subscribe to its Covenant. One section of that Covenant obligates the member toward his church “to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines.” One is faithful to his pledge only in faithful sustenance of that church and its Lord. No problem should hinder his devotion and loyalty to God, His word, and His church. One way to sustain the church is by a faithful financial stewardship as next Sunday's lesson will reveal.

### QUESTIONS

1. Discuss: “The Christian is an ambassador for Christ.”
2. What portion of the Church Covenant is studied today?
3. What are the church ordinances?
4. What does church discipline mean?
5. How can we support the worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines of our church?
6. Discuss the Christian control of the tongue.
7. What is the motive for true Christian service?
8. Discuss Titus 3:4-6.
9. Describe fruitbearing as set out in Titus 3:14.
10. How does next Sunday's lesson relate to today's study?