

# OpenTheo

## April 5th: Job 3 & Titus 2

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Job curses the day of his birth. The appearance of the grace of God purifying us for good works.

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

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## Transcript

Job chapter 3. After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. And Job said, Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night that said, A man is conceived. Let that day be darkness.

May God above not seek it, nor light shine upon it. Let gloom and deep darkness claim it. Let clouds dwell upon it.

Let the blackness of the day terrify it. That night, let thick darkness seize it. Let it not rejoice among the days of the year.

Let it not come into the number of the months. Behold, let that night be barren. Let no joyful cry enter it.

Let those curse it who curse the day, who are ready to rouse up Leviathan. Let the stars of its dawn be dark. Let it hope for light, but have none, nor see the eyelids of the morning.

Because it did not shut the doors of my mother's womb, nor hide trouble from my eyes. Why did I not die at birth? Come out from the womb and expire? Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts that I should nurse? For then I would have lain down and been quiet. I would have slept.

Then I would have been at rest, with kings and counsellors of the earth, who rebuilt ruins for themselves, or with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver. Or why was I not as a hidden stillborn child, as infants who never see the light? There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners are at ease together.

They hear not the voice of the taskmaster. The small and the great are there, and the slave is free from his master. Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, who long for death but it comes not, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures, who rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they find the grave? Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in? For my sighing comes instead of my bread, and my groanings are poured out like water.

For the thing that I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me. I am not at ease, nor am I quiet. I have no rest, but trouble comes.

There is a significant shift in genre and style between the prologue of Job and chapter 3. The characterisation of Job also seems to shift. The Job of the prologue responded to the great disasters that befell him with a determined faith and by blessing God. The Job of chapter 3, by apparent contrast, breaks out in an extended curse of the day of his birth.

Besides this, we might expect to sense the dark shadow of the events of chapters 1 and 2 hanging over the rest of the chapters of the book prior to the epilogue. Yet despite the fact that the Job of the dialogues that follow is clearly experiencing extreme suffering and distress, the shadow that rests over the text seems to have a rather different shape from the events of the first two chapters that we might presume to be casting at. The Job of the rest of the book doesn't seem simply to be bemoaning his physical distress or even his loss of his wealth and his family.

Rather, Job's accusers and his social situation seem to loom much larger in the heart of the book than we might expect from an initial impression of the narrative of the prologue. What are we to make of this? Toby Sumter, exploring some thoughts by René Girard, observes that Job's statement at the end of chapter 3, I am not at ease, nor am I quiet, I have no rest, but trouble comes, doesn't present Job's crisis merely as the devastating events of the past, nor even as his current distress, but as something very

immediate and expected to increase. He argues that the part played by Job's friends within Job's crisis should be given more attention at the very outset.

This might fit well with David Klein's argument that Job's friends, upon their arrival at the end of chapter 2, do not acknowledge Job but act as if he were already dead. Job was the wealthiest and most powerful man of the East, he was a king among his people, but he has been brought very low and become like an outcast. Perhaps his friends are swooping in like vultures and Job's crisis, as Girard has claimed, has a lot to do with his attempt to resist their attempts to reduce him to a scapegoat, to cast him out for his supposed sins and usurp his position.

Throughout the prologue there was the prominent question of whether Job was going to curse God. Now after seven days of his friend's silence with him, Job himself breaks the silence. He makes a curse in verses 1-10, followed by a lament in verses 11-26.

Norman Harvel notes the structure of the passage. There is a summary curse in verse 3 and the grounds for the curse given in verse 10. Verses 4-5 contain six curses upon the day of his birth.

Verses 6-9 contain three sets of three curses on the night of his birth. The passage is a highly artistic work of poetry, with much development of imagery, wordplay, ambiguity and assonance in the speech. Harvel lists a number of these.

The close similarities between Job 3-10 and Jeremiah 20-14-18 are widely recognised. The passage from Jeremiah reads, Like Jeremiah, Job curses the day of his birth. The announcement of the birth of a boy wishes that his mother's womb had been blocked and speaks of the trouble for which he was born.

Michael Fishbane and Harvel both note the way that Job employs themes of cosmic decreation in this chapter. The creation began with the words, Let there be light, but Job's statement is its opposite, Let there be darkness. Allusions to Genesis chapters 1 and 2 pervade Job's statement, with references to the day and the light, night and darkness, days of the year, the sea monster Leviathan, and finally to Job's lack of rest in the concluding lament.

If the Job of the prologue might have appeared to be a stoic sufferer, able to withstand great hardship with remarkable equanimity, the Job of chapter 3 is quite different. He doesn't curse God, but he curses the next best thing, the day of his birth and perhaps also the night of his conception and all associated with them. He summons the darkness of the formless void prior to the Lord's work of creation to swallow them up.

He wishes, as it were, that the events that gave rise to his existence could be expunged from history, utterly reversed. His curse invokes a sort of decreation, a let there be darkness, uttered to the light. The darkness here represents nonexistence, death and

the underworld of the abyss.

The darkness here is not just the regular darkness of the night, but the primordial darkness, a great void, a black hole as it were, emptied of stars. Job summons all of these forces against the day of his birth. The sea monster Leviathan was regarded as a chaos creature in ancient Near Eastern mythology.

It too is summoned by Job against the day of his birth. Harwell suggests that the reference to the doors of the womb in verse 10 might have an element of ambiguity, referring both to the womb of his human mother and to the womb of the earth more generally. The lament of Job from verse 11 to verse 26 begins with the summary question of why Job did not die at birth, a question that is refracted into a series of further questions in the verses that follow, leading up to verses 24 to 26 which lay out the ground for his lament.

Job's great why questions in verses 12 to 23 are punctuated by presentations of the longed for state of death, as a place of rest, as a release from trouble and suffering. The lament is in many respects a transposition of the curse into a different form. He is wishing that his existence had never come to be.

In many ways this is a wish that is more radical than merely a wish for death. He is not just wishing to conclude his existence, but that his entire existence be erased, that it had never even come to be in the first place. The evils of his life are such that death here and now would not be sufficient to erase them.

So much damage has already irreparably been done. Unraveling his entire existence is the only sufficient way to address the situation. He speaks of the grave as a place of rest.

Perhaps he is inverting Sabbath themes here, as he continues to allude to the creation narrative. Such a way of speaking of death, as a place to be more desired than the land of the living, is startling indeed. Job is not unaware of the reality of death.

However, he now sees it as preferable to his current condition. Continued life is a situation of torment and bondage, into which he wishes he had never been plunged. For a person in Job's situation, life is a doomed and terrible struggle, to which the surrender of death would at least grant a measure of relief.

While Job is not cursing God, his bitter curse and lament forcefully questions the providence of God in bringing him into existence. And, in verses 20-23, Job makes his questioning more general. Why does God bring any sufferer into existence, when they are doomed to such misery? Job's concern here is not primarily the painfulness of suffering, so much as it is its meaninglessness.

Life is like a grim labyrinth, with no clear path to follow. In the Lord's conversation with

Satan, in chapter 1 verse 10, Satan had spoken of the Lord placing a hedge all around Job, protecting him from harm. In verse 23, however, Job speaks of the man whom God has hedged in.

God is no longer his defender, but is like a besieging force surrounding him, tightening the noose. Job's worst apprehensions have befallen him. We might think back to Job's caution and concern in chapter 1, sacrificing for his children lest they had cursed God in their hearts.

Job had his worries and apprehensions then, although what is happening to him now greatly exceeds any of those. Job senses that there is even more trouble to come. A question to consider, how would you differentiate between the curse that Job does not make against God, and the curse that he makes against the day of his birth in this chapter? Titus chapter 2 But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

Likewise urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. Bond-servants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything.

They are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness, and to purify for himself a people for his own possession, who are zealous for good works. Declare these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority.

Let no one disregard you. In the opening verses of Titus chapter 2, Paul speaks to the life of the household. In his teaching in verses 1 to 10, he seems to be especially concerned to encourage a respectable and God-honouring form of life among the various groups within the church, older and younger men and women, and bond-servants.

Several scholars have remarked upon the influence of the phenomenon of the new Roman woman, with some wealthier women abandoning old standards of sexual propriety, neglecting the life and management of the household, and trying to be more

vocal in the traditionally defined public sphere. Toleration of such behaviour in the church, and the impression that the message of emancipation in the gospel justified it, would have brought the gospel into disrepute for many in the society. Many commentators have speculated that Paul had such women partly in view in his teaching in 1 Timothy chapter 2 verses 9 to 15.

Although this sort of background has likely been overstated by many, it is not unlikely that such women were part of what Paul had in his sights in verses 3 to 5. Paul is concerned that the Christian message not be ill-spoken of, and even more, that those who profess it adorn it by their behaviour. The material of the first ten verses of this chapter is similar to some of the household codes that we encounter elsewhere in the Pauline corpus. In Ephesians chapter 5 and 6, Colossians chapter 3 and 4, and also in 1 Peter chapter 2 and 3. The opening verses of chapter 2 suggest that there is a close connection in Paul's mind between Christian doctrine and appropriate ethics, even though they are not simply identified.

One of the more distinctive features of Paul's teaching here, in contrast to what we find elsewhere in his work, is his attention to the intersection of age and gender. He does not directly address wives and husbands here, but older men and older women, younger women and younger men. While the marital context is referred to and is taken for granted at many points, the teaching thus organised leads more to the development of individuals into mature exemplars of their sex.

The older men are addressed first. These are not the same persons as elders, although the elders would have been older men. The older men are supposed to be sober-minded.

Perhaps this is a statement about their being temperate, or perhaps it's a reference to their not drinking too much. They're supposed to be dignified, serious, to have an appropriate sense of gravitas. They need to command respect and honour.

Older men should be accorded honour and authority, but they also need to command it by their display of dignity. They need to be self-controlled, prudent, restrained, moderate. People who have a reign upon their appetites, their passions and their moods.

People whose wills are guided by their reason. They must be sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. These three things are presumably related to the three theological virtues of faith, love and hope.

Steadfastness corresponding with hope. Soundness in faith would be belief in the gospel and in God that does not waver under trial. Soundness in love would be seen in the commitment of the older men in their service of God and his people.

Their steadfastness would be seen in their hope-fuelled endurance under trial. Paul next turns to the older women. They need to be reverent in behaviour.

They need to show a godly integrity and holiness of life. They need to avoid slander, gossip, loose talk and excesses of wine. And Paul expects such older women to play a critical role in educating younger women in godly conduct, ensuring thereby that the household of faith is well ordered.

The older women's teaching of the younger women mostly concerns their proper behaviour in the context of their households, their practical and loving commitment to their husbands and children. Paul's language here concerning the teaching might have more of a corrective shading in its meaning. The older women are to moderate, or maybe even, as Philip Towner argues, to call the younger women to return to their senses.

The older women's instruction of the younger women is with the end of teaching them to be self-controlled, the same term that was used earlier of the older men. However, like many such virtue terms, it is coloured by gender. With regard to the virtues, men and women can be like two different kinds of instruments playing the same note.

While the note may be the same, it will have a very different timbre. As he does here, Paul also encourages self-control for women in 1 Timothy 2, 9-10. Likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness, with good works.

The younger women are also instructed to be pure, likely meant in a sexual sense here. They are expected to be good managers of their households. We should be aware of reading the term translated by the ESV as working at home in terms of modern debates about working or stay at home mothers.

The ancient household was a realm of production, education, welfare, society and all sorts of other such matters. The young woman managing her household would be deeply embedded and invested in active labour and the society and wouldn't be anywhere near as likely to be facing the home-workplace dilemma that many contemporary women do, where either choice may restrict her capacity for rising to her full stature. The alternative to working at home may not be so much working in the workplace as being a busybody, a gadabout, a gossip and a lazy woman.

That said, the location of the work is not unimportant. At the heart of marriage is the task of building a world and transforming the world together with one's spouse. Marriage is not just about enjoying a private domestic retreat with one's spouse, but about forming a realm of common labour out into the world.

A marriage where no such labour is occurring, a home that is reduced to mere shared leisure, is a marriage that is missing an important dimension. Rather than merely being independent careerists, husband and wife ideally share their home as a focus and or site

of their labour. They may not be working alongside each other, but their household is their common project.

Men and women may be distinguished in their vocations and Paul's understanding, but the household is supposed to be a true commonwealth, a sharing of the end, the focus and the fruit of their respective labours. The household also stands in contradistinction to the public arena. As in 1 Timothy chapter 2, Paul seems to have some concerns about the way that women were intruding upon the functioning of that realm, in ways that compromised its operations, seeking authority over men in a manner that disrupted the actual operation of healthy authority.

Paul doesn't address such issues so directly here, but they are likely partly in view in the notion of the submission that women are supposed to show to their own husbands. When modern Christians speak of submission, they tend to situate it primarily in the direct face-to-face relationship of the husband and the wife. However, the headship of the man was primarily directed out into the world, and the submission of the wife would chiefly have been to that, in the shoulder-to-shoulder relationship of their common labours.

Submission in the face-to-face relationship may have been rather secondary. A wife who honours her husband greatly strengthens him, and if he is a good husband, the strength and standing that he enjoys will be used to build her up. The wife's submission is less a matter of passive and reluctant capitulation to him, than willing and active collaboration with, counselling of, and honouring of her husband as he sets the lead.

She should not be engaged with a tug-of-war against him, nor just be his doormat. Rather, they should both be throwing their united yet differing energies into their common task, from which they both end up stronger for being one flesh. Paul hopes that by correcting the younger women, the older women will protect the word of God from being ill-spoken of.

Titus, for his part, is now instructed to teach the younger men in a manner comparable to the way that the older women teach the younger women. He must present himself as a model, a lived example of the behaviour that he is encouraging. In addition, he must provide sound teaching, marked by integrity, truth, and seriousness.

The young men need to be self-controlled, restrained, prudent, and temperate. Once again, Paul is concerned that those bad-mouthing Christians in Crete be silenced, not being able to fault the behaviour of the members of the Church. One of the things that we might observe here is the way that for Paul teaching in the Church on certain matters needed to be gendered and generational.

It matters who teaches certain lessons. While part of Paul's concern here is doubtless propriety, he likely has other considerations in mind too. If Titus were primarily the one charged to teach the lessons to the younger women, then the teaching might be



experienced primarily as something designed to get them into line.

However, if the teaching is given to them by godly older women, women who are honoured and respected and reverent in their behaviour, the younger women will more readily perceive the teaching as something designed to build them up, to strengthen them, to enable them to become like those older women, not just as something designed to get them in line. There are many occasions where good teaching is hamstrung by the fact that it is not being taught by the right person. A teacher who can serve as an exemplar of that which they are teaching in a way that makes it desirable to the person being taught is always going to be a lot more effective.

Even if Titus were able to teach the young women the content of their appropriate behaviour accurately, under typical circumstances he could never be as effective as a godly older woman who could also exemplify it. Paul concludes his instructions here by addressing bond servants. As in 1 Timothy, his instructions here are limited to bond servants.

He does not address masters at this point. Such servants are to act not just as man-pleasers, but as those who are looking towards a greater master, who are concerned to please Christ and by their behaviour to adorn his doctrine, behaving in such a way that stands out from everyone else and draws attention to the beauty of the teaching of Christ. In verses 11-14 we arrive at what might be thought of as the climax of the letter.

In this condensed theological statement, Paul expresses the theological foundation for the transformation of life that he is encouraging. It arises from the epiphany of God's grace and history. In the work of Christ, this has brought salvation for all people.

As Paul makes clear at the beginning of 1 Timothy chapter 2, the gospel is something that comes with the message of salvation to every class of persons. Already in this chapter he has spoken about the way that salvation can be lived out by older and younger men and women, and also by those in slavery. This is not a salvation exclusive to the rich or to a particular people like the Jews.

It is for everyone. And this epiphany of God's grace and history results in a transformation of behaviour. It leads to a rejection of old ways of life that characterise the age that has passed, ungodliness and worldly passions.

The alternative to these are self-controlled, upright and godly lives. Such lives develop out of the epiphany of God's grace in Christ in the fullness of time, but are also fuelled by anticipation, by the blessed, God-given hope of the appearance of the glory of our great God and saviour, Jesus Christ. That future horizon leads to dramatic renovation of life.

Scholars have debated the end of verse 13. Is Jesus Christ to be identified with our great God and saviour, which would be a most remarkable declaration of the deity of Christ, or

is there some other way of understanding the expression? Tanner, for instance, suggests that we should take Jesus Christ as being in opposition with the glory of our great God and saviour. Jesus Christ is the glory of God.

There is still a powerful theological statement being made here, but it may be more subtle in character than others believe it to be. Verse 14 is redolent with all sorts of memories and echoes from the Old Testament. Christ gave himself to redeem us.

This might remind us of the way that Jesus is described as a ransom for all in 1 Timothy 2. He has redeemed us from the realm of lawlessness and wickedness, and he has done so to purify us for himself as a new people. We are supposed to be his special possession. We might think here of the Lord's statement to the children of Israel at Sinai.

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. We might also think of statements like Ephesians chapter 5 verses 25 to 27. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, so that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

God's intention to create a holy, chosen people for himself is in keeping with the Old Testament promise that he will be their God and they will be his people. The redemption from lawlessness and the purification also draw our mind back to the promises of the new covenant. God will purify his people by sprinkling clean water upon them.

He will forgive their sins and their lawless deeds, and he will place a new heart within them, writing his law upon it. All of this is coming to pass through the work of Christ, and the goal of all of this is to have a special godly people who are devoted to good works. The moral transformation of life that Paul is encouraging here is not a secondary thought, it's been the whole point all the way along.

This is what God's action of grace was always aiming at. Lives that have not been revolutionized by such grace to display holiness and godliness are still born in the faith. Paul concludes the chapter by charging Titus to teach effectively and with authority.

He must boldly exhort and encourage people in these matters, stirring them up to this expression of faith and good works. He must rebuke false teachers, troublemakers, and those who are not abiding by the teaching, and he must do all of this with authority, not allowing anyone to disregard him, in such a manner he would fulfil the purpose for which Paul left him in Crete. A question to consider, what can we learn from the conclusion of this chapter concerning the proper relationship between grace and good works?