

## Titus 3:1-15 Devote Yourselves to Good Works: A Summary of the Letter to Titus

There are a couple verses at the end of the chapter 3, I won't specifically address concerning the divisive person (9-10). This topic has already come up 1:13-16. But, I would like to bring the letter of Titus to a close this morning as we consider the topic of good works. I get this from vv. 8 and 14. Verse 8: **"The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works."** And in v. 14: **"And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful."** Summary of Good works in the book. I have 3 truths with some applications to follow.

1. Good works are a result of the truth. As we just read v. 8, Paul says the saying is "trustworthy." In other words, what I am saying is the truth. You can trust it. Also look at 1:1: **"for the sake of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness."** The truth leads to godliness, from which good works flow. Now look at 2:1: **"But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine."** And then in 2:10: **"so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our savior."** Look back at 1:16. Speaking of unbelievers, particularly those who make false professions, Paul says, **"They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work."** To know God is to know the truth. And when a person understands the truth, good works follow.

Jesus says, **"you will know a tree by its fruit"** (Matt.12:33). In Ps. 1:1-3 we see a picture of one grounded in the truth. **"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers."** As Christians, we are planted by the streams of truth. And good works are the fruit of our branches.

2. Good works are a result of the power of the Gospel. Brothers and sisters, our good works are a result of the power of Gospel. Look back at 2:14: Jesus **"gave himself for us to redeem us from lawlessness and to purify himself a people for his own possession . . ."** And then notice the result of this change: **"who are zealous for good works."** To illustrate this truth, consider the culture of Crete when the gospel came. Look back at 1:12: **"One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.'" This is not a very moral island. The same can be said of the Ephesians. Paul says, "remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). He says the same to the Colossians: "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him . . ." (Col. 1:21-22).**

Just consider what you would be like if the Word of Truth had not come to you! What would we be like as a community? What would our standards of morality be? Maybe we would try to work things out in a lawful manner, as a people come up with a standard of ethics good for the whole. But, eventually, without the truth and power of God, we are as the Bible says in Rom. 3: **"None**

are righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:11-18).

Now look over to our text in 3:3. And notice Paul as a “good” Jew does not exclude himself. We read: **“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.”** Brothers and sisters, this was us. This was our forefathers. This was our culture, our people, our place. And do not think you are not included in such a group before the power of the gospel changed you! If you will be saved, it will be because you realize you are one of these people. When the religious leaders asked why Jesus hung out with the tax collectors and sinners, he responded, **“*Those who are well do not need a doctor, but those who are sick.*”** Brothers and sisters, we are more than sick. Without the power of the gospel we are “dead in our trespasses and sins,” (Eph. 2) and as Paul says, **“*without hope and God in this world.*”**

Now look at 2:11-12: **“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 . . .”** Look down at 3:4-6: **“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, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior . . .”**

One of our problems in the American Church is that our kids pray a prayer or raise a hand at Bible school and whether right or not, there is no time where they see these kinds of things in their own hearts. And then they grow up in some kind of quasi-moral environment of weak, devoid of power “Christianity.” Everything becomes “cultural.” There are “good ole boys” everywhere, thinking they are “good” people because they haven’t murdered, stole, lied (at least not very much), or take the Lord’s name in vain. Brothers and sisters, I believe a healthy church is one that emphasizes the power of “conversion.” On the flip side of this, we are also guilty of very little faith, not realizing the great power of God to change the worse of sinners, to transform “liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” And change them into a people who do good works!

3. Good works mark the Church of Christ. In this letter, we see good works EVERYWHERE, displayed in how we treat one another and how we treat the world. This begins with the elders as they must be qualified for their position by their works (cp. 1). In 2:1-10 we see how we are to act toward one another in our relationships. Older men teaching the younger men how to act. Older women teaching the younger women how act. In cp. 3:12-14 Paul instructs the church to treat Artemas or Tychicus, and Zenas the lawyer and Apollos well: **“see they lack nothing”** (v. 14). In cp. 3 we see good works toward the world, which I will come back to in application in a moment.

It should be obvious to us in this sinful world that God is a good God, and his desire is for his people to reflect his goodness is by doing good works. In the beginning God created everything

“good.” And in his sovereignty, sin entered the world. And from this time, God’s people, those who believe, those who have faith (1:1), are to be a light in this dark world. We are a “city on a hill.” We are the “light on the lampstand” (Matt. 5). Because of the truth within us through the working power of God, we are his representatives as those who do good works. And this will continue until the return of Christ and the consummation of all things. With this in mind, let’s finish the rest of our time with applications.

Application: Good works require close relationships in the body. We see this clearly in cp. 2. Older women must teach younger women. Older men must teach younger men. For Christian families, this begins in the home as Christian fathers and mothers teach their children the commands of God, the commands of Christ. Parents, we are examples to our children in love and good works. We are what we are where we live. Next, we must pursue close relationships in the body where we are “teaching one another” the commands of Christ, which result in good works.

Application: Our good works must also be directed at the world. Look at 3:1-2: **“Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, so speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.”** Here, I would like to make some general comments for application. The first good work, Paul reminds them and us is to be: **“submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work . . .”** Who are the rulers and authorities? He is speaking of civil government. In every part of the world, in every culture, every language, the peoples of this world live under the authority of civil government. And civil government, whether good or bad, is given by God.

Look with me to Rom. 13:1-7: **“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.”**

Now, this is a very general statement concerning government. And the example here is clearly paying taxes. For to the Jews, this was a big deal. They were already paying their own local, and temple taxes. And then, the Roman government taxed them more. And we must not forget that there was a religious authority attached to the Roman government as the emperor was seen as some type of “god.” Therefore, for the Jews, this went further than mere taxes. As a religious people under the authority of God, paying taxes to Rome was like giving money to the devil. And on one occasion, they ask Jesus about paying taxes, to which he replies, “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar; Give to God what belongs to God.”

My question: How do we apply this truth in all the varying situations of our day. (taxes that support abortion, seat belts and road regulations, rules and regulations for property management, and many other regulations where we believe the government is overstepping our rights.) Well, this is not a black and white answer. Christians in different places in different circumstances will certainly approach things differently. But, generally speaking, in these areas, we must do our best to be submissive and obedient as good citizens.

Paul was a model citizen. He always wrote to new churches, reminding them to be submissive and obedient to the authorities. And there is a reason we are the best citizens. We are honest. We do what is right. We try to be the best citizen because we know our citizenship resides in heaven. We know what is true! But, what do we do when the government requires us to go against the clear command of Christ to make disciples (this includes preaching, teaching, meeting together in churches, organizing ourselves in churches according to Scripture, worshipping as we see fit, etc.) Well, think of Paul himself. Though a model citizen, he often found himself in prison. This was usually a result of preaching the gospel in public. And, in the end, he found himself in prison because He chose to obey God rather than man.

I'm not sure if you've followed the story of a congregation in Canada that chose to continue meeting in full capacity as they always have during the COVID restrictions. Well, their pastor was arrested this week where he sits in jail. Now, many say he was simply arrested for breaking the law during these times, not so much for preaching the gospel. Well, maybe so. But, in my estimation, the leadership, and the church, have decided to obey God rather than man. I think of Daniel. He was told not to pray or "petition" any god, except Darius the king. What did Daniel do? As he had always done, he opened his window and prayed toward Jerusalem (Dan. 6). He could have closed the window. But, he did not! And he wasn't even preaching. He was merely praying to God in his own home. He chose to obey God rather than man. And, what happened? He was arrested and sent to the Lion's den.

With this in mind, let me say briefly, there are lots of examples in the Bible and in the lives of Christians where we choose to obey God rather than men. We choose not to sin, but to obey God. I don't think this is always so "black and white." There is great freedom for individuals and churches to decide when they are being asked by the government to disobey God. (At the very least, we must preach the gospel to our neighbors and to ourselves. We must continue to meet together unless providentially hindered. We must continue to worship, preach the truths of the Word of God, baptize, take the Lord's Supper, sing spiritual songs and hymns; among other things) As Jesus says, "**Give to God what is his; and to Caesar (as good citizens) what is his**" (Matt. 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25). I do not know exactly what the future holds, but as a church we will approach them together with the Word of God in hand, knowing that as they persecuted Jesus, so will the world persecute us.

Let me finish with a couple comments in final application. Look at 3:2: "Speak evil of no one." This means everyone. Remember, the world is not our enemy, Satan is. And we must, by the grace of God, love the world, praying for them. Also in v. 2, we must "**avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.**" It is amazing how much quarreling happens on social media. And this quarreling is certainly not gentle, nor does it show courtesy.

Now, I am not saying that we do not stand for the truth, and that we can and should do this on social media. But, I am saying, be gentle, show courtesy, avoid quarreling.

Brothers and sisters, we must remember why we do good works. Look back at 2:10 We “**adorn the doctrine of God our savior.**” We show the world that which is true. And we show the power of the gospel as we do good to one another and to those who persecute us.