

TITUS

3:1-15

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Taught at our Sunday morning service, 22nd January 2023 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: Titus 3:1-15

Introduction

This is our final week studying the book of Titus, a short letter - around a 5 minute read - that the apostle Paul wrote to Titus, a young pastor on the island of Crete. Yet, despite its short length, this book says so much, and lays a foundation for how any church should operate.

Sometimes the third chapter, and specifically verse 8, which we'll study this morning, gets all the attention - that Christians should do good works. However, that cannot be isolated from the first two chapters that deal with sound leadership in the church, and sound doctrine taught and applied to our lives. And of course, the good works that we do as Christians are not to earn our salvation - but rather, in response to it, and we cannot live a God-pleasing life *without* good works - we read last week in chapter 2, speaking of Jesus...

Titus 2:14

who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

If you've missed either of the previous studies on this book, I urge you to listen to the recordings of them on our web site.

Chapter overview of Titus

As a quick reminder, the 3 chapters of this book are laid out as follows...

Chapter overview of Titus

- Chapter 1: Sound leadership
- Chapter 2: Sound doctrine
- Chapter 3: Good works

Overview of chapter three

And zooming into chapter three, we can break it down into four parts

Overview of chapter three

- v1-3 - Our attitude to authorities
- v4-7 - Grace changed us
- v8-10 - Good works, without distraction
- v11-15 - Greetings and good works

Chapter three

As we begin our study of chapter three, let's consider what we read in chapter 2 - because although chapter breaks are useful (they let us know where we are), we can easily forget that this is one single letter, and that what we read in chapter 3 is a *continuation* of what we read before.

Previously, we saw Paul write that Titus should *speaking the things which are proper for sound doctrine*. And he explained what that looked like for older men, and older women. And that they should teach the young women and young men. All so that *the Word of God may not be blasphemed*. That is, nothing we do should cause people to speak reproachfully about the Bible, or indeed about Christ. Our lives should be such good examples, that anyone who is antagonistic towards the gospel, or towards Christians, has nothing bad they can say of us. And that applies to not only how we live at home (or in our personal lives), but how we act at work (or in our public lives). We should be men and women of good character, of integrity. We should be hard workers, serving with our hearts as well as our heads and hands.

Paul goes on to say that God's grace that brings salvation teaches us that we should *we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*. That is, God's loving kindness should produce such a response in us, that as we wait expectantly for Jesus return, we won't be living in a way that would displease Him (or embarrass us) if He were to return right now. And the way that pleases God is not inaction, but good works. As we read a moment ago in verse 14, we should be zealous for good works - that is, showing great energy or enthusiasm for them. Titus is instructed to *speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority*. His own life being an example. And Paul continues into this chapter...

Titus 3:1

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work,

Titus then, is to remind the Christians in the churches in Crete of these things. By speaking, teaching, preaching these things. Teaching God's Word. Line up line, precept upon precept. And specifically here in this verse he is told to remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities - that's not church leadership he's referring to, but rather, civil leadership. Those that set the laws of the land, who rule over it - whether elected or not - and those that have the responsibility of carrying out that which is established in policy, or enforcing that which is set in law.

So, simply put; we should be law abiding citizens. We should be subject to the laws that are set, so long as those do not require us to do anything contrary to the Word of God, or require us to *not* do anything the Word of God compels or instructs us to.

Paul earlier wrote this to the Christians in Rome:

Romans 13:1-7

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.

Why does Paul write this? Well, just as we're not to be the kind of person who answers back to our employers, and we're do be good employees, we're also to be subject to our rulers and authorities, and be good citizens. And for the same reason - that the Word of God may not be spoken of reproachfully.

Does that mean that our government is perfect and beyond reproach? Not at all. Any government is made up of sinful, imperfect people. But Paul was aware of that when he wrote these things.

Unfortunately however, some Christians, attempting to make a stand for the truth, have brought the truth of God's Word into disrepute. In recent years there was an American creation speaker who had said some good and helpful things, but then refused to pay his taxes to the US government because they were in part used to fund the teaching of evolution. He went to jail for it, and it was a poor witness. Jesus Himself said "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

There's no case for disobeying the law of the land. The Roman empire certainly was not a morally perfect one. Yet, as we just read, Paul instructed the Christians in Rome to be good, law-abiding citizens. Of course, we're not to compromise on the Word and what God would have us do. But we're not to stir up unnecessary problems - rather, we're to be ready for every good work. J Vernon McGee commented on this verse saying...

A good example of this is the Wesleyan movement in England. Wesley never tried to straighten out the king of England or even the Church of England. He just went out and preached the Word of God. Men were converted, among whom were men like William Wilberforce, the great philanthropist and abolitionist. They were men who had been gamblers and drunkards, with no concern for the poor, until they came to know Christ. These men started the great labor movement associated with the Wesleyan revival in England, which was the beginning of the movement against child labor and the protection of workmen on the job. We need individuals who will enter into government and take social action, but the church as an organization is not called upon to go into politics.

J Vernon McGee

Paul continues instructing to Titus to remind them, we read...

Titus 3:2

to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.

No-one includes rulers and authorities. Does that mean we can't critique or criticise our government? Of course not. And, given the policy decisions and directions that have and continue to happen, we absolutely should speak up, we should vote with our conscience in line with the Word of God, and we should pray for our Government - especially those in it that love the Lord. However, we must not jump on bandwagons and throw almost slanderous phrases around. Covid was an unedifying cess pit of difficulty with this, and wherever you draw the line on how the last few years played out in government, in churches, and this church, you must not forget verse 2. Look at the end goal of all this... Paul wrote to Timothy:

1 Timothy 2:1-4

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Here in Titus we're told to speak evil of no-one, to be peaceable, gentle, and to have humility. And that is indeed toward all men. Toward everyone you know.

Speaking evil of no-one means gossip is out. We are not to malign anyone or to speak disrespectfully of others. Not just in our verbal conversations, but in our private texts or emails too. You may recall I noted once before how in 2018 rumours of child abductors spread via WhatsApp spread through a small town in Mexico. The rumours were untrue, but two men were burned to death by an angry mob before anyone checked. Don't begin *or* repeat gossip. Stop it before you start roasting someone with your words before checking anything out. And even *if* they are wrong, you are to be peaceable, and not contentious. You are to abstain from fighting - with your hands AND your words. We also read here that we are to be gentle.

Furthermore, we are to show humility to all men. Why? Well, consider the verses that surround this...

We should show humility...

- Because leadership is hard (v1)
- Because of our past (v3)
- Because we couldn't save ourselves (v5)
- Because, despite that, we have been made heirs with Christ! (v7)

Our past should indeed keep us humble, for we read:

Titus 3:3

For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

That is, do not forget that you needed saving yourself. Don't be the Pharisee that Jesus spoke a parable of in Luke 18, who said "God, I thank You that I am not like other men". You *were* like other men and women - you were a sinner in need of a Saviour. And if it wasn't for Jesus, that's how you'd still be! We read in 1 Corinthians...

1 Corinthians 6:11

And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

God's grace changed us. It restored our relationship with God. We continue here in verse 4...

Titus 3:4-7

But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

So again, it wasn't the rod of God, or His correction that saved us. It wasn't by our own efforts. But rather it was His kindness, evidenced in His mercy, His grace. As I mentioned last week, God didn't want to reform us, He wanted to redeem us, to save us. And not just save us, but give us an inheritance with Him, making us joint-heirs with Christ! That's wonderful! And that's the message that we are take to the world around us - not that God wants to reform them, but that He wants to save them.

But having been saved by Him, we, and all those that accept Christ as their Saviour, are to be filled by Him with His Holy Spirit - that we would be transformed through the renewing of our mind, as we read in Romans 12. And the evidence of the Holy Spirit living in us is the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

I like this reminder from Milton Jones...

The Spirit of God is a real person you can invite in. But watch out - in time he will go over, pull the fridge from the wall and say 'What's all this mess under here?' But at least he helps clear up

Milton Jones

We read on in Titus...

Titus 3:8

This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.

This wasn't a note for Titus to pass onto the Christians in Crete and be done with it. No, he was to affirm these things constantly, *these things* being all he just said. That is, how God had saved us through His mercy and grace, not only justifying us, but making us joint heirs with Christ. The result? That we should be careful to maintain good works.

You may recall this comment from Charles Spurgeon that I shared a few weeks ago when we looked at the topic of serving...

He has done all this for you, has bled away His precious life, has died in agonies most exquisite upon the cross. What have you done for Him?

Charles Spurgeon

We are to serve God. We're to serve one another. Doing good works - not to earn our salvation, but in response to it. But there's also a consistency I see here - we are to *maintain* good works. And you know, that's so important, for we can easily take on ministry and responsibility in serving God, and then as days turn to weeks to months and to years, we can fade in our enthusiasm, our commitment and willingness to serve. But we are not called to serve until we're bored. Rather, we are to persevere, always seeking what the Lord would have us do, which won't ever be "give up", or "do it worse so you can do it quicker", for this is for God's glory, not our comfort. We read in Matthew 5:

Matthew 5:16

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

We are to spend our time doing these good works, these profitable things. But conversely we are not to waste time on unprofitable things. Paul continues writing to Titus, saying:

Titus 3:9

But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless.

The first useless thing is foolish disputes. That is, we're not to get in needless bun fights over things that simply don't matter, that would take our time away from getting on with the real work of ministry.

The second useless thing is genealogies. That means we shouldn't act as the Mormon's who spend large sums researching genealogies so that they baptise for the dead, or others who try to prove that they are the lost tribes of Israel.

The third listed useless thing we are to avoid are contentions - that is wrangling, debating and causing strife in the church.

And then we are told to *avoid* strivings about the law. Some of you may recall, when Ron Matsen used to teach on Genesis TV on a Friday evening (followed by a live questions and answers show), there was a period of months where people phoned in each week specifically to argue that Christians should meet on the sabbath, else we're breaking the law - and they did so regardless of what passage and topic had been taught in the hour preceding it. That striving was indeed unprofitable and useless.

What Paul writes here bears similarities to what he also wrote to Timothy:

1 Timothy 1:3-7

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

Always consider the fruit of what you are doing or saying. Is it edifying people in a godly way? Is it causing others to love God or others more? Is it building others' faith? If so - then keep doing it! But if the result is endless disputing, arguing, and strife - you are on dodgy ground. It is easy to get sidetracked into the unprofitable and useless, so be wary of doing that.

And continuing in this vein we read in verses 10 & 11...

Titus 3:10-11

Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.

Indeed, the enemy loves to distract us from our walk with the Lord, and especially our service to Him. And Paul is saying don't get embroiled in continual debates and disagreements where someone is walking or talking contrary to scripture, with the intent or effect of causing division in the body. We're to give a firm warning or reprimand a couple of times, but after that we're to refuse to get into a heated disagreement.

The Greek word translated divisive here in the NKJV is *hairesikos*, which is where we get our word heretic from, as indeed it is translated in the KJV. And the idea behind this is those that would cause a schism or split in the body. It is those that follow false doctrine. And we should be careful to note that it is *they* who are turning away from the truth of God's Word, and not the other way around.

That's what Paul is saying here in writing that such a person is warped and sinning - that is, *they* are the one who is deviating from the Word of God. They are the one missing the mark. Of course, that's not how they see it - indeed several times I've seen folks who don't believe the Bible on a matter say "oh, you're being divisive" to those who hold fast to the Bible. But let me say clearly, *holding to the Word of God is not being divisive. Holding to and propagating an opinion or belief that is contrary to the Word of God is divisive.*

And Paul says they are self-condemned. Why? Because they take a position that is contrary to the truth of God's Word. They may even say "You're so opinionated, you don't accept any other views, you're intolerant!". However, the problem is that they disagree with the Bible and that is the source of their frustration.

AW Tozer said:

The best way to prove that a stick is crooked is to set a straight one beside it. No words need to be spoken.

AW Tozer

Paul now closes this letter, writing...

Titus 3:12-13

When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing.

Paul wants Titus to come visit him, but it seems not to the detriment of the churches in Crete - so he plans to send either Artemas or Tychicus there first. This is the only place Artemas is mentioned, but Tychicus we know more about - in Acts 20 Paul had gone to Greece, stayed 3 months, and then returned from Philippi through Macedonia via Troas, accompanied by a few, including Timothy and Tychicus. In 2 Timothy we learn that Paul had sent him to Ephesus. But then we read in Ephesians Paul describe him as a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, while in Colossians he does the same - also calling him a fellow servant in the Lord. What a testimony that is of this man - may we desire to be men and women of such character!

Paul notes he's going to spend the winter in Nicopolis in Greece, and instructs Titus to send Zenas - who is also only mentioned here - and Apollos onward on their journey, providing for their need. Apollos being a Jewish man described in Acts 18 as eloquent and mighty in the scriptures, who we also see mentioned in 1 Corinthians chapters 1 and 3.

And we read...

Titus 3:14

And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

So, Paul uses the same phrase as in verse 8 - *to maintain good works*. But also says that the Christians there, and therefore us too, should *learn* to maintain good works. The implication being to learn by use and practice - to get into the habit of good works. And, he writes, to meet urgent needs - that is we should not be negligent of needs around us in each others lives. That our Christian roots would bear Christian fruits.

Verse 15...

Titus 3:15

All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace be with you all. Amen.

This particularly puts a smile on my face having just come back from the pastors and leaders conference in Oxford yesterday - there are many folks that were there who are praying for us. Some of them you know. And we see a joyful relationship between Christians here in this closing verse. Paul asking Titus to greet those who are fond of them.

And his last comment is noteworthy - *grace be with you all*. Paul's ministry was one of grace - he knew the grace, the unmerited favour, he had been shown, and that he should show toward others. In his opening to this letter he speaks of grace, and here he ends with it. Let all *you* do be done with grace. As he wrote to the Colossians:

Colossians 4:6

Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Conclusion

This short book says so much. But simply put, it teaches us what sound godly leadership is to look like in the church. It teaches us what sound doctrine is - as older men and women, and as young men and women. And how there should be discipleship. It speaks of how we should act in our homes, and in our workplaces. That no-one would speak poorly of Christ because of us. And it teaches us how God's grace should lead us to good works. In other words, good works are not where the gospel starts, but where it should end.

Application questions

As you go through this week, consider the following questions to help apply this chapter to your life:

- Do you hold your tongue from speaking evil of anyone?
- Are you peaceable, gentle and humble in the way you approach others?
- What are you doing to maintain good works? What are you doing?