

Open in prayer

Read Titus 3

¹ Remind them to submit to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work,
² to slander no one, to avoid fighting, and to be kind, showing all gentleness to all people. ³
For we too were once foolish, and disobedient, being deceived, being enslaved by various
passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, being hateful, detesting one another. ⁴ But
when the kindness of God our Saviour and his love for mankind appeared, ⁵ he saved us—
not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy—through the
washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. ⁶ He poured out his Spirit on us
abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we
may become heirs with the hope of eternal life.

⁸ This saying is trustworthy and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have
believed God might be careful to devote themselves to good works. These are good and
profitable for everyone. ⁹ But avoid foolish debates, and genealogies, and quarrels, and
disputes about the law, because they are unprofitable and worthless. ¹⁰ Reject a divisive
person after a first and second warning. ¹¹ For you know that such a person has gone astray
and is sinning; he is self-condemned.

¹² When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me in Nicopolis,
because I have decided to spend the winter there. ¹³ Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and
Apollon on their journey, so that they will lack nothing.

¹⁴ Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works for pressing needs, so that they will
not be unfruitful. ¹⁵ All those who are with me send you greetings. Greet those who love us
in the faith. Grace be with all of you.

Introduction

Every religion in the world says climb. Pray harder. Give more. Try better. Be good enough. Christianity says God came down. That's the scandal of grace.

This morning we come to the end of Paul's letter to Titus. And here's the main point. The gospel does not just save. The gospel shapes how you live. Grace-saved people live differently. Not to be saved. Because they are saved.

Here's the way we'll work through the text. First, grace-saved people live gently and submissively. Titus 3:1-7. They submit to authority. They speak kindly. They refuse to fight. Not because the world deserves it. Because the gospel produces it. Second, grace-saved people are devoted to good works. Titus 3:8-11. Grace is not lazy. Grace labours. Grace is not soft on truth.

Grace avoids foolish quarrels. Grace devotes itself to what is good. Third, grace-saved people serve urgent needs. **Titus 3:12-15**. Real needs. A widow's electricity. A brother's empty fridge. A missionary's travel. Grace serves.

Let me ask you something. Say someone followed this past week, Monday to Saturday. What would they say you are devoted to? Your comfort? Your reputation? Your screen? Or the good works God has prepared for you?

You cannot climb your way to a life of good works. But grace does what effort cannot. The same Spirit who washed you and renewed you and poured Himself out on you, and He produces the in you fruit.

Connect to the gospel

We're going to connect to the gospel right up front this morning. I want you to see that in this text, the ethical commands find their grounding in the gospel. **Titus 3:1-15** teaches that we do not do good works to be saved. We do good works because we are saved. Love-saved, mercy-saved, grace-saved believers do good works.

Read **Titus 3:3** with me. For we too were once foolish, and disobedient, being deceived, being enslaved by various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, being hateful, detesting one another. Foolish disobedience. Enslaved to various passions and pleasures. These are not small mistakes. Minor misdemeanours. These are the sins that reveal a rebellious heart. **Titus 3:3** reminds us who we were.

Then, **Titus 3:4-7** reveals how we were saved. In **verse 4**, the kindness of God our Saviour and his love for mankind appeared. We are love-saved. The Greek word that translates love for mankind is philanthrōpia. God is philanthropic. What does that mean? Philanthropic means God is warm towards mankind. Generous towards mankind. God gives to those who have nothing to give back to Him. God's philanthropic love saves us. We are love-saved.

In **verse 5**, he saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy. We are mercy-saved. God mercifully withholds from us what we deserve. We lived in malice and envy. We were hateful. We detested one another. We deserved punishment. But God is merciful. He withheld from us what we deserved until we came to saving faith. We are mercy-saved.

And then, in **verse 7**, having been justified by his grace. We are grace-saved. All of God's riches are ours at Christ's expense. God gives us what we do not deserve, in abundance. We are grace-saved.

We needed salvation because we lived in foolish disobedience. So God sent

His Son. Jesus appeared. The personification of the love, and mercy, and grace of God. As it is written, because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. The cross stands behind every word in **Titus 3**. The kindness of God appeared in a manger. The kindness of God was nailed to a tree. The kindness of God rose from a tomb. God's love, and mercy, and grace, are abundantly applied to all who repent and put their faith and trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Now, to what end? Why have we been saved? **Titus 3:8**. ⁸ This saying is trustworthy and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed God might be careful to devote themselves to good works. The gospel produces something. The gospel is not inert. The gospel is not impotent. The gospel is potent. The gospel is a good root that bears good fruit. And the fruit of the gospel is good works. That's what Paul wants us to be devoted to.

The ethical commands in **Titus 3:1-15** are grounded in the gospel. We do not do good works to be saved. We do good works because we are saved. Love-saved, mercy-saved, grace-saved, saints do good works.

So, what does a grace-saved life look like? That's the question. And the first answer is, grace-saved living is gentle and submissive.

1) **Grace-saved living is gentle and submissive** (**Titus 3:1-7**)

¹ Remind them to submit to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work,
² to slander no one, to avoid fighting, and to be kind, showing all gentleness to all people.

Grace-saved living is gentle and submissive. The good works that God expects from His children are so practical. Submit to rulers. And be kind to everyone. Of course, submission isn't absolute. When human authority commands what God forbids, we obey God not men. But the default posture of a grace-saved person is not rebellion; it is submission and obedience.

Do you submit to the authorities you did not choose? Whichever authorities God has placed over you? Do you obey them? Are you a model citizen? And in the community you live. At home. At work. At church. Are you known as a person who does not speak ill of anyone? Who avoids conflict? And is gentle and kind? Or does your tongue betray you?

Submission to authority would have been a sensitive topic for Cretans. Roman authorities were often corrupt. And they were not kind to Christians. In South Africa, we know what it is to distrust authority. But grace-saved people submit. Not because the authorities deserve it. Because the gospel produces

it. We speak gently. We refuse to slander. We are peaceable. Even when provoked. What would it look like for us, as a church, to be known for this?

If you are not in Christ, these commands are not a ladder to climb. They are a mirror. You cannot do this. Not perfectly. Not consistently. Not from the heart. And that is the point. Your good works cannot save you.

³ For we too were once foolish, and disobedient, being deceived, being enslaved by various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, being hateful, detesting one another.

Remember what you were like. Your memory of who you were fuels humility. This is why we are gentle. Remember you were not naturally nice. No, you were once the fool. You were once the disobedient. You were once deceived. Paul isn't stirring the dark memories of your past to pull you down. He's stirring the dark memories of your past to remind you that you were once rotten, and now you don't have to be. That old-self died with Christ. You get to live differently now that He is in you.

Remembering your past produces gentleness toward those still trapped in their sin. You did not save yourself. You were rescued. Act like it towards others. I see my past self in this list. I'm so glad I'm not the man I used to be. But it pains me to confess that sometimes I see my present self in this list too. I need the same love, and mercy, and grace that I preach from the pulpit active in my own heart. Praise God He isn't short on love, and mercy, and grace. He has enough. Enough for me. Enough for you.

⁴ But when the kindness of God our Saviour and his love for mankind appeared, ⁵ he saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy—through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. ⁶ He poured out his Spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life.

This is the gospel. This is the motivation.

Do you see the Trinity here? God our Saviour appeared. The Holy Spirit washed us and renewed us. The Father poured out His Spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Each member of the Trinity has a part in saving us.

And what is this washing? It is the Spirit cleansing us from the filth of verse 3. What is this renewal? It is the Spirit making us new. Not a fresh coat of paint. A new heart. And He poured out His Spirit abundantly. Not a trickle. A flood.

Paul uses a rare word here for regeneration. It appears only twice in the New Testament. Here and in Matthew 19:28, where Jesus speaks of the renewal of

all things. The Spirit's work in you now is a foretaste of what is to come.

And why? So that, having been justified, declared righteous, by grace, we may become heirs. Not servants. Or slaves. Sons. With hope of eternal life.

And the goal? Heirs with the hope of eternal life. This hope is not a vague feeling. It is an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. The future grace of eternal life is what makes present good works possible. We labor now because we know the inheritance is secure.

The kindness of God appeared. He saved. He washed. He renewed. He poured out. He justified. He made us heirs. **What more do we need?** Nothing! Christ has paid it all! Christ has done it all! Christ has given it all!

We get to rest in this. We get to stop striving. Stop performing. Stop comparing. And allow the Spirit of God to produce in us gentleness and submissiveness. Flowing from gratitude. But hear me. This is not passivity. Grace does not make us lazy. Grace makes us labour. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, Paul says, for it is God who works in you. The same Spirit who washed you and renewed you and poured Himself out on you, He produces the fruit. Not by your effort. By His power. So we rest. And we work. Not to earn favour. From favour.

So, what does a grace-saved life look like? That's the question. And the first answer is, grace-saved living is gentle and submissive. But grace does not stop there. Grace makes us devoted. And grace makes us protective. Second, grace-saved living is devoted to good works.

2) **Grace-saved living is devoted to good works** (Titus 3:8-11)

⁸ This saying is **trustworthy** and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have **believed** God might be careful to **devote** themselves to **good works**. These are **good** and **profitable** for everyone.

Insist on these things. **What things?** The gospel. Mercy. Grace. Love. The kindness of God that appeared. The washing of regeneration. The hope of eternal life. Insist on the gospel. Not as a theory to debate. As a truth to live.

The gospel produces something. It is not inert. It is not impotent. It is potent. The gospel is the engine. Good works are the carriages. It's like a train. The engine moves. The carriages follow. The gospel moves. Good works follow.

So who is watching your week? If someone traced your steps, Monday to Saturday, what would they say you are devoted to? Your comfort? Your reputation? Your hobbies? Your screen? Or the good works God has

prepared for you?

Devote yourself to good works. Not to be saved. You're already saved. Not to earn favour. You already have favour. To display gratitude. To adorn the gospel.

⁹ But avoid foolish debates, and genealogies, and quarrels, and disputes *about the law*, because they are unprofitable and worthless.

Avoid. Not every hill is worth dying on. Not every theological debate is profitable. Some quarrels are worthless. Some genealogies produce nothing but division. Some disputes tear down what grace builds up. When Paul says avoid, he means avoid. Do not engage. Do not entertain. Do not share the post. Do not forward the email. Avoid.

But let me be clear. This is not a call to abandon doctrine. **Jude 3** stands. Contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. The gospel is not a foolish debate. The Trinity is not a genealogy. The resurrection is not a quarrel about the law. Paul is not telling us to be silent about essential truth. He is telling us to stop fighting about the stuff that doesn't matter.

And this is not a small matter. Gossip is not a mistake. Factionalism is not a weakness. The need to be right, the love of controversy, these are the sins of weak churches. The Prince of Peace will not have his children squabbling about silly things when they should be about the business of His kingdom.

This is an easy sin to fall into. The gospel must kill the need to win every argument. Free us from the tyranny of being right. Because we do not need to prove ourselves. Defend ourselves. We can let a foolish debate die.

¹⁰ Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning. ¹¹ *For you know that* such a person has gone astray and is sinning; he is self-condemned.

This is hard. It should be hard. Paul says reject division. Warn once. Warn twice. Then act. This is not a witch hunt. This is not vindictive. This is protective. A divisive person damages the flock. A wolf does not need to be loud to scatter sheep. The wolf only needs to be persistent. So, after two warnings, the church must act.

And how do we act? Firmly. We do not delight in rejection. We grieve it. But we protect the flock. Christ died to make one new humanity. He tore down the dividing wall. When someone is divisive they try to tear down what Christ died to build, the church must act. Because we love what Christ loves.

The goal of warnings is repentance and restoration. The same goal Jesus gives in **Matthew 18:15-17**. We warn because we love. We reject when the

divisive person persists, and even then we grieve. Self-condemned means their own refusal to repent condemns them, not our verdict.

So, what does a grace-saved life look like? First, grace-saved living is gentle and submissive. But grace does not stop there. Grace makes us devoted. Second, grace-saved living is devoted to good works. But what does that look like in ordinary life? In travel plans and greetings and practical service? Paul ends with everyday life. Grace-saved living serves urgent needs.

3) Grace-saved living serves urgent needs (Titus 3:12-15)

Verse 12, When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me in Nicopolis, because I have decided to spend the winter there.

Note the ordinary. Paul makes plans. He asks for company. He wants Titus with him. Not theological argument. Friendship. Partnership in the gospel.

Verse 13, Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey, so that they will lack nothing.

Note the imperative. Help. Diligently. Zenas and Apollos are travelling for the gospel. The church is to provide for them. This is practical. This is hospitality. This is patronage for the mission.

Support missionaries. Give. Host. Send. Pray. Grace-saved people are generous people. Not because they must earn favour. Because they have received mercy.

Verse 14, Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works for pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.

Note the purpose. Learn. Devote. So that they will not be unfruitful. Good works are not optional. They are the fruit of grace. They meet urgent needs. They display the gospel. Serve urgent needs. The church is not a social club. It is a rescue station. Urgent needs arise. Serve them when you see them.

What is an urgent need? Let me give you criteria. First, it is pressing. It cannot wait. It is not a preference. It is a crisis. Second, it is real. It is a need, not a want. Third, it is within your reach. You cannot meet every need. God has given you specific resources. Fourth, it is gospel-aligned. Meeting it does not enable sin. It does not undermine the mission. It displays grace. Fifth, it starts with the household of faith. Then it moves outward as God gives opportunity.

But hear me. This is not a call to burn out. You cannot do everything. You are not the Saviour. Christ is. You are a vessel. So ask, Is this need mine to meet? Has God given me the capacity? If yes, then give. If no, make Yolanda aware

of the concern. She represents our social concern. The elders maintain lists for benevolent need.

Oh, and do not do this to be seen. Do not do this to be praised. Do not do this to earn favour with God or man. Love because God loved you. Serve because you are an heir.

Look around. **Who is in urgent need?** A widow whose electricity is about to be cut off. A family fleeing abuse who needs safe lodging. A brother who lost his job and cannot feed his children. A sister who is ill and cannot cook or clean. A missionary like Zenas and Apollos who needs travel provisions. A refugee that needs legal help. These are pressing needs. Meet them. Be fruitful.

Verse 15, All those who are **with** me send you greetings. **Greet** those who love us **in** the faith. **Grace** be **with** all of you.

Note the grace. The letter ends where it began. Grace. Grace be with all of you. Greet one another. Love one another. And rest in grace. Grace be with all of you. The weary. The suffering. The doubter. The mature. The unbeliever who is still listening. Grace be with you.

Conclusion

Every other religion tells you to climb. Christianity says God climbed down. But grace does not leave you in the dust. Grace raises you to new life.

At the start I asked what your week says you are devoted to. Here is the answer grace gives. Not comfort. Not reputation. Not screen. Christ. And because Christ has saved you, you now live differently. Not to be saved. Because you are saved.

So what does this life look like? Grace-saved people live gently and submissively. Grace-saved people are devoted to good works. Grace-saved people serve urgent needs.

Do you see? The gospel is the engine. Good works are the carriages. The engine moves. The carriages follow. Grace moves. Obedience follows. Not fear. Not duty. Love. Mercy. Grace.

The kindness of God appeared. He saved. He washed. He renewed. He poured out. He justified. He made you an heir. **What more do you need?** Nothing. Christ has paid it all. Christ has done it all. Christ has given it all.

So rest in Him. And work from Him. Serve from fullness, not for fullness. You are already loved. Already forgiven. Already an heir. Live like it.

Grace be with all of you. Amen.

Close in prayer

Benediction

Titus 3:4-7, But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, he saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy—through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. He poured out his Spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior so that, having been justified by his grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life.