

“Be Ready for Every Good Deed”
Titus 3:1–8
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We will be looking at Titus 3 in this study. It is a little letter, but it packs a punch. There are some really amazing passages in this little letter. Titus 2:11-14 is maybe one of the best passages in the Bible to explain how God's grace leads to our growing in Godliness, how God's grace not only means that we're justified and accepted by God, pardoned of our sins, but we're also sanctified. We're made Godly and strengthened in the Christian life. It's a it's a very, very important passage for that idea. The passage we'll be in for this study contains one of the clearest passages in the Bible explaining how God's grace and our good works fit together in the Christian life. We're Protestants. We know that we're not saved by works. So how do good works fit into the Christian life and where do good works fit into the Christian life? Paul explicitly explains that very thing in this passage in Titus 3.

The theme of the book of Titus could be summed up this way; The grace of God has appeared to train us to live Godly lives in the present age. There's another phrase as well in Titus 2:10 where Paul talks about adorning the doctrine of God our Savior by our lives and that's very much the theme of this letter. In Titus 2, Paul has been telling Titus how Christians need to do that in their lives in the congregation. In Titus 2 Paul addresses older men, older women, younger women, younger men, pastors, and even those who were enslaved in the congregation. He basically tells them the way that you all relate to one another and other people is a witness, a testimony to the world, to the reality of the Gospel. In Titus 3, Paul turns his attention to how we relate to everybody else out there, and that's what we're going to be looking at in this study.

Let's hear God's Word in Titus 3:1-8 and 14 which says *[1] Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, [2] to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. [3] 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. [4] But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, [5] 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, [6] whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, [7] so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. [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. These things are excellent and profitable for people.*

[14] And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.

Amen and thus ends this reading of God's holy, inspired and inerrant Word and may He write His eternal truth upon all our hearts.

We live in a worsening world and culture. We experience more antagonism towards Christianity, towards the church, towards Christ, towards the Gospel than we would have experienced in this culture 50 years ago. I can remember as a young person in this culture, feeling like, not that the culture was Christian, but there was a respect and a regard for some Christians. Some of us are old enough to remember how Billy Graham was thought of largely in our culture. He was an admired person. You don't see people like that in our culture now. The

culture is becoming more and more antagonistic towards Christians, towards Christian things. How do we respond to that? What's our posture supposed to be like towards a culture that is becoming more antagonistic to the Gospel?

The good news is there are passages all over the New Testament that tell us exactly what to do, and this Titus passage is one of them. This is a passage where you have an older pastor, Paul, telling a younger pastor what he needs to be telling the people in the congregation about how they're to relate to the culture around them. So he's giving us exactly the help we need. Bill Davis is a professor at Covenant College and he teaches philosophy, theology and other things. He was telling us a few months ago at a meeting "Not every young person that I teach in college is a Christian, but many of them are and they're there wrestling through questions of how to live as believers in a culture that they feel is antagonistic. The thing I hear the most is when they say to me 'Professor Davis, teach me how to love a world that hates me.'" I'm not sure at 18 that I was asking that kind of a question. That's a really profound thing to ask – teach me how to love a world that hates me. How do we do that?

This passage doesn't tell you everything in answer to that, but it tells you several really important things and I want to particularly highlight three things that this passage says about how we're to relate to a world that hates us. First of all, this passage tells us that we are to be a witness by our good works/deeds. Secondly, it gives us a why – why should we do this? What's our motivation for doing this, why we live this way? Then finally, it relates our good works to the finished work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the Christian life in a way that helps us understand that the Gospel is salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, but that it leads to a life filled with fruitfulness in doing good deeds. Where do our works fit in the Christian life?

Really, the theme of this passage is that we are justified by God's grace in order to be careful to engage in good works. Those things aren't contradictions. They're not in competition with one another. They go together perfectly. So let's begin by looking at what Paul says Titus 3:1 which says [1] ***Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work.***

The bold here is very much like what Paul says in Romans 13. Remember, these are not Christian rulers in authorities. By God's grace we do have Christians in politics and in government which is a wonderful thing. Some of them are members of this congregation and leaders of this country. That's a wonderful blessing that we should not take for granted. Paul didn't have any of those in Roman government. At the time Paul is writing, the main leaders of the culture and of the government are not only not Christians, many of them are virulently anti-Christian like Nero. Yet he says, here's the fundamental posture I want you to take towards government – be subject to rulers and to the authorities, be obedient. This is particularly fascinating because the Cretons really hated Roman authority. They viewed the Romans as alien occupiers of their land and of their culture and really kind of thought about them the way the Jewish people thought about the Romans occupying the land of Israel. They didn't want them there. They didn't like them and they were known to be particularly rebellious. Paul says to this Christian congregation, don't act like the other people in your culture. You're to have a different view towards those in authority.

We know in the Old Testament that God invented public, civic and governmental authority to bless people, not to harm people, but to bless them. Even when unbelievers are wielding that authority, Paul wants us to be respectful of that authority. Now, of course, Christians cannot obey when laws contradict what God commands us to do in the Word.

Remember Daniel's friends in the book of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, they were told they had to bow down to the statue of the king and worship. What did they say? We cannot do that because if government tells you to do something that the Bible tells you not to do, you are to follow/obey God, obey the Scripture, not what the secular authority says. But when secular authority gives lawful commands, what's our attitude? We're happy. We love embracing the authority of a good nurturing civil government. That's our basic posture towards government.

Then Paul goes on to talk about not just how you relate to government, but how you are to relate to unbelievers in society. Paul says in the latter half of Titus 3:1 that we are to be ready for every good deed. Titus 3:2 says *[2] to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.* In other words, this applies to everybody around you, the unbelievers, people that are suspicious of you, people that don't like you; show every consideration for all men. He wants us to witness by our good works, by caring about the well-being of all men that the Gospel is true.

Paul emphasized this in the previous chapter. Titus 2:5-6 says *[5] to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. [6] Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.* When young Christian women live the Christian life in their homes and in their families, you know what one thing that results from? It is that the Word of God is not reviled. As a young Christian mother, just by living the Christian life in your home, you are part of a witness that keeps the Word of God from being reviled.

Then he says in Titus 2:7-8, *[7] Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, [8] and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.* Now he's talking to men and preachers. When you see stories about moral failures of religious leaders, especially Christians, what immediately happens? The secular world says, 'This is proof that Christianity is not true.' Paul is saying to Titus to live in this way because it keeps the attacks of the evil one at bay.

Paul goes onto say in Titus 2:9-10, *[9] Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, [10] not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.* Even the way slaves live can have a powerful witness to the Gospel. That sentence could be the theme of the whole book; to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior with the way we live. Paul is saying that even slaves in this congregation are able to do that. It's fascinating what he is saying for Paul is not saying go solve world hunger or go bring about world peace. These are very simple things that he's asking us to do in our relationships with one another, doing good deeds. By the way, good deeds or good works simply mean doing things towards other people that God commanded us to do in the Bible.

For instance, love your neighbor as yourself or act justly, love mercy, walk humbly with your God or honor your father and mother. Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness. Do not covet. In obeying those commands of God, you are actually doing good to other people and any of us can do that. Young people can do it. One of the most amazing stories that I've heard probably in the last 20 years is of an 18-year-old young woman who grew up in a Muslim family, in a closed Muslim country. She heard the Gospel being preached in her language through translation, on the radio, in her home country, and became a Christian. She decided that what she wanted to do was learn Hebrew and Greek so that she could translate the Bible into the language of her tribe. Her uncle tried to kill her because she had

become a Christian. When she was interviewed about this, the pastor said to her, 'What were you thinking when your uncle was trying to kill you?' She said, "I was thinking, this man has a religion that he would kill for, but I have a Savior that I would die for." That's an 18-year-old young woman. I thought 'I need to sit at her feet and learn what it means to live the Christian life.' No matter where you are, what you are in, you can all bear witness to God by the way that you live the Christian life, by the good works that you do to other people.

Paul describes different kinds of people in the Christian church that are able to do this. You don't have to be in charge of anything. You don't have to have a title like president or elder or deacon. All of us can do this. It might be as simple as taking a meal to an unbelieving neighbor who is sick and showing the tangible love of Christ and then maybe that opens up the door for you to be able to talk about Jesus and the Gospel with that person. It can happen in high school. It can happen in college. I remember a five-year-old boy asking a question of a 45-year-old man that changed his life. All of us can do this. Paul is saying, 'I want you to bear witness by the way you do good works.'

God says to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, *[3] I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.* Ever since then, God's people's purpose in this world is to bring blessing to the world. Now, here's the thing. The world hates us but we don't hate the world back. We want them to be blessed and we want to treat them in such a way that it says to them, 'We actually care about you.' Just because you love your neighbor who's not a believer or love your enemy, who's not a believer does not necessarily mean that they're going to love you back. We don't know how God will use our faithfulness. We don't know how God will use our good deeds or our good works. Sometimes it changes people's lives and sometimes they reject the Gospel.

Remember, people saw Jesus not only preach, but do good works and some people listened to Him and became followers and others rejected Him. We cannot expect to be more successful than our Savior. There were some people that rejected our Savior. John Huss was preaching the same Gospel that Martin Luther preached 100 years before Martin Luther preached it and they burned John Huss at the stake. Martin Luther's preaching was used to bring about a Europe wide reformation and revival. Was John Huss unfaithful and Martin Luther wasn't? No, they were both faithful, but God chose to use Martin Luther's faithfulness in one way and John Huss's faithfulness in another way. We don't get to choose how God will use our faithfulness. We don't get to choose how God will use our good works to unbelieving people but we know that God will use that witness. We don't know how we just know that He will.

Paul says, 'What do you do towards a world that hates you?' You do good works for them. Show the love of Christ to them, behave towards them in such a way that even though they resent it, they know that you're acting like you care about them. I remember talking to a friend who was living in a sinful lifestyle. He knew that I was a pastor and he said to me, "Why do you treat me with such regard?" And I said, "It's because I love you. I genuinely care about you. I disagree with how you're living your life, but I still love you.' God wants us to have that kind of witness into an unbelieving world. So, Paul says to be ready for every good deed to all people (Titus 3:1-2).

The second thing I want you to see is that Paul explains why you ought to do this. I love this because this is hard. There are some people that are hard to love, and there are some people that are hard to do good deeds for. Sometimes they're in our families. You may have an unbelieving relative in your family who you are trying to be a Christian witness towards and it's hard. One of the godliest women in my congregation back in Jackson had a mother who was

very, very bitter, very, very hard and she worked her whole life as a Christian to love her mother well, but her mother really didn't respond to that and that was really, really hard for her. So how do you love people that don't love you back? How do you love people that are hard to love? How do you love the unbelieving world around you? Paul's going to give you motivations in this passage and in fact, he'll give you three motivations.

The first motivation is what we are like apart from the grace of God in the Gospel. Titus 3:3 says *[3] 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.* In other words, Paul saying, 'How do you love a world that hates you? Remember what you were like apart from the Gospel. Remember that you were the enemy of God.' Paul says in Ephesians 2 that we were dead in trespasses and sins. That's what we're like, apart from the Gospel, apart from the grace of Lord Jesus Christ. If you're an unbeliever reading this today, the message of this church is not "We're awesome. Come be like us." Their message is "we are sinners saved by grace. We deserved God's judgment but He was gracious to us." So their message is not we are great. Their message is God is gracious and they want you to know the graciousness of God to you that they have experienced themselves. That's our message. We were dead in trespasses and sins. We were once foolish ourselves. Apart from the grace of Christ you are at enmity with God and God loved you anyway.

The second motivation is Paul tells us to think about who your God is. Titus 3:4 says *[4] But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared.* In other words, what is God like? God is kind and good and loving. When God tells us to love our enemies, He is not telling us to do something that He hasn't already done. While we were yet enemies Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6). God in His kindness and love has shown us how to love a world that hates us because He loved a world that hated Him. When we have been transformed by His grace, we want to be like Him. We want to be kind and loving like our God. So Paul says there's another motivation for loving people that are unloving or hard to love, or who don't love God, or who are your enemies or who think that you hate them and that is to remember what your God is like.

Paul continues in Titus 3:5-6 which says *[5] 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, [6] whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.* Remember not only what you once were, not only what your God is like, but what God has done for you. In other words, He didn't say, 'all you good people out there, you line up over here and I'm going to save you' because there were no good people to line up over there. When you join this church, you have to vow to God that you are not good. So good people are not allowed to join Briarwood Presbyterian Church. The first question you have to answer is, do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure and without hope except in His sovereign mercy? Thank God, God did not send Jesus to save good people or nobody would have been saved. He sent Jesus to save sinners and that's exactly what He did.

Paul's pointing these things out to us because they motivate us to love people that are sometimes hard to love. I look at the challenges for young people today. Young people today are up against challenges that I was not up against in the 1970s. It's a sort of the reverse of the old thing about how we tell you how much harder it was in the old days. It's actually harder for you. Paul is giving us these motivations saying look at look at what you were apart from God, look at how loving God is and look at what He did in sending His Son.

Then thirdly, Paul beautifully explains how our doing good works/deeds, fits with being saved by grace. Paul says in Titus 3:4 that God saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness. In other words, we were not saved on the basis of our good deeds and then says in Titus 3:8, *[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. These things are excellent and profitable for people.* Paul did not say this on the basis of our good deeds, so that we would be careful to engage in good deeds. Okay Paul, help me here a little bit, what do you mean by that? Thankfully, this is not the only time Paul says this.

Paul says this in Ephesians 2:8-10 which says *[8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast. [10] For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* So here he says you are not saved by works. You're saved for good works. You're not saved by your good deeds, by your good works, you are saved to good deeds and to good works.

In other words, in the Christian life, our good works are not the cause of our salvation. They're the result of our salvation. They're not the root of our salvation. They're the fruit of our salvation. They don't cause us to be saved. They're the result of having been saved and that is so important for us to keep in mind. We don't do good works to try to get God to love us, to try and save ourselves. That's not why we do good works in the Christian life. We do good works in the Christian life because God loves us. God doesn't love us because of our good deeds. He loves us into our good deeds.

I hope you have a relationship in your life somewhere, maybe it's a husband or wife, maybe it's a parent and a child, maybe it's an aunt or an uncle or a grandparent or a dear friend, where you've experienced this yourself; where a person you have experienced the love of someone who simply loves you because they love you and you delight to do things for that person. I hope you have a relationship like that in in your life somewhere. That's what Paul's talking about. God in His mercy and grace saved us not because of our good deeds and now we delight to do good deeds for Him because He loves us, because of His grace to us, because He has saved us, because He's accepted us, because He has pardoned us, not to try and get him to do those things for us.

On the other hand, you may have had a relationship in life where no matter what you do for a person, it's never enough and that kind of relationship will kill you. Paul really wants this to be clear in our minds. We are not saved by our good deeds, but we are set free by God's grace to finally be able to do good deeds, to glorify Him and it's a delight to do that. When someone loves you and accepts you in spite of all of your sin, weaknesses and failings, it's a delight to serve that person. That's what it's like to serve God. That's what it's like to do good deeds. You can't do enough because of what He's done for you.

The Apostle Paul is explaining all of this so that we'll know how to relate to a world that hates us. We don't know how the world will react to our good deeds/works, to our tangible expressions of love but we do know that the Lord will use it for a witness. We do know that that's how we're supposed to relate to a world that's antagonistic for us. It's so wonderful for in many ways, we're entering into a time that may be more like the first centuries of the church than has existed in 18 centuries. That is both scary and it's a little comforting because we have explicit instruction in God's Word for what we're supposed to do in just this kind of a situation.

I know that I have not told you a single thing that Frank Barker and Harry Reeder haven't already told you 40 times in the last 60 years. There is nothing new in what I've said, but all of

us, because it's hard to do this, can grow weary in doing good deeds. So, here is my encouragement; do not grow weary in doing good deeds. Keep on doing what you have been doing. God will use it and He'll help you to do it, even in hard places. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You that we could be together under Your Word today. Encourage this dear congregation, comfort their hearts, make them strong. Use them as Your witness in their lives, in their works, in their deeds for your glory. We ask it in Jesus' Name, Amen.