

# The Mission of the Good Church

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[ 0 : 00 ] We are midway through a series in Paul's letter to Titus, so please do turn with me to Titus. You can find it on page 998 in the Church Bibles, 998, Titus chapter 3.

Last week we were in Titus chapter 2 with Paul's urging of Titus to teach that which accords with sound doctrine.

He was talking very much in the household, good behavior in the household. And in chapter 3 here, he turns his attention to the world out there, to living godly lives in the public sphere.

So we're looking at Titus 3 and verses 1 to 8. Titus, remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

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.

[ 1 : 33 ] 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, so that being justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

This 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. Amen. This is the word of the Lord. Well, before we think about that in a bit more detail in a moment, we'll pray together and ask for our Heavenly Father's help.

So let us pray, shall we? As we just read in Titus, he points us forward to the great hope of eternal life.

And let me read a few words from Isaiah that speak of the glorious new creation that we look forward to. For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind, but be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create.

[ 3 : 24 ] For behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people.

No more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. Father, thank you so much for your great grace and your mercy to us undeserving sinners.

Our hearts well up with joy at those words from Isaiah as we look forward to all that you have promised. Thank you for the great hope of eternity with you in the new creation, where we will be glad and rejoice forever.

Help us to dwell on these great truths of the gospel. Help us to share these great truths with others. Help us to live lives that adorn the great gospel truths that our friends, neighbors, colleagues might share, and the great hope that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Help us now as we turn to your word. Speak, O Lord, that we might be changed. We ask this in the name of our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 4 : 49 ] Amen. I wonder what you think about when mission is mentioned in church.

Quite often, we tend to think that mission is something that other people do. It's a separate section of the church. It's the job of the mission committee or the job of missionaries, or it's the job of whoever is running Christianity Explores.

And we need to get that way of thinking clear out of our heads this afternoon, because Titus is a letter all about mission. Now, the word may not appear on the surface of the text, but it runs right through the letter.

The whole letter is about mission, about gospel growth, about people being brought from death to life, about the transforming truth of the gospel. It's a letter all about witness to the gospel, and that comes into particular focus in our section this afternoon.

What Paul was urging Titus to do on Crete was to establish good churches, churches that would hold firm to the apostolic gospel, and good churches impact the world around them.

[ 6 : 15 ] They are missionary churches. And key to that is churches that taught the truth and live the truth. Churches full of people who know the truth and who live it out.

That is the real missionary church. That sort of church adorns the gospel, makes the gospel beautiful. That sort of church will transform a place because that sort of church produces people that have been transformed by the gospel.

And people that are transformed by the gospel adorn the gospel. They make it beautiful to other people. The great hope for Crete, for Titus there on that island, the great hope for Glasgow, for your friends and neighbors, is the true missionary church.

People who hear the words that we speak and also see our transformed lives. Mission is at the heart of every true church.

Mission is the job of every true Christian. The true missionary church must be built up with Christians. People like you and I, who together adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

[ 7 : 34 ] We must together live out the truth. Because to do so, commends the gospel to people that see us day in, day out. The people that we rub shoulders with.

And all of us have responsibilities in building churches like that. Churches that adorn the gospel.

And the questions I want you to ponder as we leave here today are, am I being built up in the truth so that I'm living the truth, doing good work so that those outside notice?

Am I contributing to the mission of the church? Last week, we saw that our focus was on living good lives in the household setting.

That was what chapter 2 was about. And this week, Paul turns our attention to living good lives in the public arena. You'll notice the outward focus in our passage.

It starts in verse 1 with the authorities, the rulers and authorities. And by the end of verse 2, Paul has all people in focus. It's a very clear outward focus in our section.

[ 8 : 49 ] And it's all about good living in the public sphere. So three points this afternoon. Firstly, good living means doing good works for all people.

Verses 1 and 2. Good living means doing good works for all people. Remember what we've seen in the letter so far. Titus is there on Crete. A very, very unpromising place for the gospel.

Just consider again chapter 1 verse 12 where we get that rather scathing assessment of the Cretan culture. Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.

That was the sort of place that Crete was. But Paul was hopeful for a flourishing of the gospel there. How was that going to happen? Well, Titus was to appoint good teachers, men who would hold firm to the truth and refute error.

Teachers who would teach the truth and as we saw last week, insist on the godly living that would flow from that. And now he broadens out that scope in chapter 3 to the public sphere.

[ 10 : 00 ] Christians on Crete, Christians here in Glasgow, are to be devoting themselves to good works in public. Paul begins with a slightly narrower focus, talking about what it is to do good works in relation to the civic authorities.

But then by the end of verse 2, he's broadened it out to all people. Christians are firstly to devote themselves to good works in relation to the civic authorities.

And that means submitting to them, obeying them. Now consider for a moment the culture on Crete. It's known for its liars and laziness.

I don't suppose that its politicians were a particularly nice bunch. If you think we have it bad here, listen to this assessment of the Cretan political class.

This is from a Greek historian at the time. He says, it was impossible to find personal conduct more treacherous or public policy more unjust than on Crete.

[ 11 : 10 ] Not a great place. Impossible to find personal conduct more treacherous or public policy more unjust. Now imagine that you are one of those early Christians there on Crete.

You hear this letter being read out. You read chapter 3, verse 1. You're going to think, come on, Paul. Pull the other one. Have you seen what it's like here?

Do you have any idea what it's like to live on Crete? Huge temptations, I imagine, for them just to withdraw completely from the corrupt society they lived in. To hunker down in their wee Christian ghetto.

But no. They are, says Paul, to be submissive. To be obedient. To be ready for every good work. They're to be out there engaged with the governing authorities where they can be.

To be model citizens. Not hiding away in a little group of their church meeting. They're to be out there involved, doing good.

[ 12 : 14 ] Paul is clear. Be submissive to the rulers and authorities. Be ready for every good work. I guess the question for us is, are you a model citizen in that regard?

Are you a model citizen? But more than that, Christians are to devote themselves to good works in relation to everyone else.

It's a pretty broad category, isn't it? Friends, neighbors, colleagues, people you bump into in the shops. Everyone. Look at what he says.

Speak evil of no one. Avoid quarreling. Be gentle. Show perfect courtesy towards all people. All people. That sort of living is shaped by the gospel.

It is a living that will stand out because it's so unusual. How often do people seize a moment to speak badly of someone? Just spend a day in any office in Glasgow and you'll hear little comments, snide remarks.

[ 13 : 26 ] Someone who never speaks evil of anyone. That sort of person is going to stand out, isn't it? That sort of person is living, chapter 3, verse 2, speaking evil of no one.

You will stand out. The truth leads to godliness. That you believe certain things about God will be evidenced in the way you live your life.

Not just here in the church but out there in the world with the people that you work alongside, live alongside, family. And Paul urges those there in the church on Crete to devote themselves carefully to doing good works.

central to the mission of the church. And Paul urges you and I here today to devote yourself to doing good to all people.

It really matters how we treat those out there. It really matters. Your life will either adorn the gospel or it will detract from it.

[ 14 : 34 ] People, when they look at you, how you live, they will either be attracted to find out more or they'll be turned off and want nothing more to do with the gospel. So how we live out there in the world really matters.

We're to do good. So how can you do good in your particular context? It might look different depending on your situation, but what opportunities do you have in the place that you live to do good?

In your workplace, in your neighborhood, in the school that your children go to? It's worth thinking about and pondering. How can I adorn the gospel in my particular situation with the particular people that I know, the people that I see, the particular responsibilities I have and abilities?

How are you going to show perfect courtesy to all people? That sort of living adorns the gospel.

Well, that's Paul's instruction. Live good lives. Do good in the public arena, both in terms of how you relate to the civic authorities and everyone else.

[ 15 : 57 ] But how are we ever going to live up to that? How is that possible? Well, in a similar pattern to chapter 2, Paul sets his commands there in verses 1 and 2 alongside the great truths of the gospel.

The gospel is the engine that drives godliness in the home. We saw that last week. But the gospel is also the engine that drives our godliness in our public lives.

That's our second point, verses 3 to 7. Good living is enabled by the gospel. Good living is enabled by the gospel. Paul, for the second time in the letter, sets out glorious gospel truths.

He does it because knowing the salvation of the gospel, being reminded of that, gives us the

motivation to live lives that are worthy of the Savior. When we consider all that we have been given in the gospel, we gladly respond in obedience, in doing good to those around.

God. That is why Paul urges Titus in verse 8 to insist on all that he says in these verses. Knowing the truth leads to godliness.

[ 17 : 11 ] Knowing these things that Paul sets out here will lead to doing good in the world around us. We see in these verses a past, a present, and a future snapshot for the Christian.

Verse 3, for we ourselves were once foolish. And he goes on, that's our past state. But, verse 4, when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us.

That's what Christ has done. And then, looking to the future in verse 7, we are heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is the great transformation of the Christian from death and hopelessness to the hope of life eternal.

Let me remind you of what you once were, says Paul. Foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others, and hating one another.

It's pretty hard-hitting, isn't it? But, I think it's a fair reflection. It's a fair but sobering assessment of what life was like before you came to know Christ.

[ 18 : 36 ] All of us were like that once, says Paul. Remember where you've come from. Remember what you were before Christ saved you. It's a great antidote, isn't it, to pride and any sort of superiority that might keep you from getting involved in the world around you.

I imagine there was a great temptation for the Cretan Christian to look down on the society around them. Crete was a pretty horrible place. How awful, how could people behave like that?

well, says Paul, there by the grace of God go you. That is what you once were. Understanding where you've come from will enable you to get involved with the world around you rather than shrink back with horror.

Seek to do good. Seek to do good to all because that is what you used to be like. Remember what you once were, says Paul. But let me remind you of what you are now.

Verse 4, but you have been saved. And it's all because of God's goodness and loving kindness and mercy. Nothing to do with what you've done. Not at all. It's all his doing.

[ 19 : 52 ] Washed and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, given to us through Jesus Christ. You have been justified by his grace. Here is what God has done for you.

And it's astonishing, isn't it? As we think about it, the scale and the magnitude of what he has done for us, sinful human beings, it's just breathtaking.

When we consider what we once were, totally undeserving. Go and do likewise to your fellow man, says Paul. Here's what you once were.

Here's how God has treated you. Here's what God has done for you. Go and devote yourselves to good works, even to people who are undeserving. All of us were undeserving, weren't we?

We didn't deserve anything. And won't it be a powerful witness to the gospel if we are willing to do good and serve others who are not deserving? Perhaps you can think of someone even now, someone who really doesn't deserve your help.

[ 21 : 01 ] Consider for a moment God's grace towards you. A right understanding of the gospel leads to right living towards others, to the civic authorities, to everyone else.

And that sort of living will commend the gospel. It will adorn it. It will make it beautiful. And this links to our final point. Good living is motivated by mission.

Good living is motivated by mission. Look on to verse 8. The saying is trustworthy. Paul's referring to all that he's just said in verses 3 to 7.

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. It's the repetition of a now familiar but crucial point in this letter.

[ 22 : 05 ] Insist on the truth, Titus. Insist on the truth in order that those who believe the truth, those who trust in God, are careful to do good works.

It's the big message of the letter. Truth leads to godliness. Our lives must match our doctrine. good works. What we say we believe must be backed up with our lives, and that means doing good, living the sort of lives that adorn the gospel.

And that is where I want us to focus our minds as we finish. Just notice the final sentence of that section. These things, i.e. what he's just said about good works, these things are excellent and profitable for people.

This is the great mission purpose behind your lives. Your lives, your good works, are excellent and profitable for people.

People out there who don't yet know the salvation that he's just spoken about. How you live in front of them, the things that you do for them, will commend the gospel to them.

[ 23 : 20 ] It will adorn the gospel, will make it beautiful. It will be excellent and profitable for them. As people that you know, as they see your transformed lives, as they experience undeserved kindness at your hands, they will more readily hear the words you utter, words of truth and life eternal.

To quote James Philip on this point, what will convince men is not bare doctrine, but the fact that it works.

And that's true, isn't it? You, in your life, are a living demonstration that doctrine works. It transforms.

forms. I think back to a crucial year in my own life. I took a year out between school and university. And it was the witness of two men, both a few years older than me, that convinced me not only to take the Bible seriously, but also convinced me that there was something life-changing contained in its pages.

[ 24 : 38 ] I looked at the way those two guys lived, the way they treated their possessions, the way they treated other people, went out of their way for other people, including me.

I wanted to know the God who was the Lord of their lives. They adorned the gospel with how they lived, and it was compelling. If it wasn't for those two guys, I wouldn't be a Christian.

Let me end where I started. Mission in the church is something that we're all called to.

Through our lips and our lives, we are to commend the gospel. And often it's in the very ordinary day-to-day slog. It's in the very ordinary acts of kindness and goodness that we're able to express to ordinary people like you and I.

perhaps no other Christian reaches the people that you do. You are, we all are, the missionary arm of the church.

[ 25 : 50 ] How we live, the way we do good works for others, we'll commend the gospel. people. Will you dwell on the gospel afresh?

Just consider verses three to seven over and over again. Will you dwell on that? Will you live a good life and response and make that wonderful truth visible to the world around?

chance? Let me pray. Father, thank you for the great and glorious reminder of the gospel here.

A reminder of what we once were outside of you. foolish disobedience led astray.

But through your great mercy, you have saved us. And through nothing that we've done, it's all of you. So help us to live in glad obedience in response to all that you've done.

[ 27 : 05 ] help us to take seriously Paul's instructions here to live good lives in public with all people.

And might we do so that we adorn the gospel, that we might make it beautiful, that people looking at the way we live might consider Christ.

So, Father, would you help us and strengthen us by your spirit to live such lives? We ask it for your sake and your glory. Amen.