

Doing Good Works in Public

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[0 : 00] Well, would you turn with me in your Bibles to Paul's letter to Titus. If you have one of the church Bibles, I think that's page 998. If not, well, it's near the end of your Bible after 1 and 2 Timothy and before the long letter to the Hebrews.

We've been studying these last few Sunday evenings. Paul has been preaching to us from Titus and we've reached chapter 3. We're going to read the first part up to verse 8.

I'll read in from verse 15 of chapter 2. Declare these things. Exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

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 towards all people. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures.

[1 : 13] Passing our days in malice and envy. Hated by others and hating one another. 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. Through Jesus Christ our Savior. So that being justified by his grace. We might become heirs. According to the hope of eternal life.

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 do good works.

These things are excellent. And profitable for people. Amen. And may God bless to us. His word. Amen. Well a very good evening to you.

[2 : 24] Please do turn back to Titus there. Page 998. And we'll be looking at chapter 3 and the first 8 verses there together.

So Titus chapter 3. It can be very easy I think to be very cynical about the world out there.

Cynical about who governs us. Cynical about the public bodies that serve us. Schools. NHS. All those kind of bodies. And cynical about society at large.

It's all going down the pan we think. It was so much better back in 1992. Thinking in these ways. Our focus as Christians can gradually become less and less outward focused.

And more and more focused inward. It can be very easy to adopt the sort of bunker mentality. Let's just hunker down in our Christian ghetto. Because the world out there is just so unpleasant.

[3 : 36] That keen desire to reach out with the good news of the gospel that once burned within us. It has dampened down to a faint flicker. Or has been blown out altogether.

Perhaps you know that as Christians we ought to have an outward focus. A mission focus. But actually that's somebody else's job.

It can be easy to mentally devolve that responsibility to someone else. That's the job of the mission committee. Or it's the job of the missionaries. That's what the roberies are up to.

Mission. That's them. Or it's the job of whoever runs Christianity Explores. But we need to get that way of thinking clear out of our heads. You see Titus is a letter all about mission.

And in particular in our section tonight he turns our gaze outward. Now the word mission does not appear on the surface of the text. But it runs right through the letter.

[4 : 35] 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 it comes into particular focus in our section today. What Paul was urging Titus to do on Crete was to establish good churches.

Churches with a crystal clear focus on mission. That is the great purpose of the church isn't it? Mission. The great task of proclaiming to the ends of the earth the gospel.

And the task of making disciples. And key to that mission there on Crete was church leaders that taught and lived the truth.

So that the churches were full of Christians that spoke and lived the truth. Paul wanted to see there on Crete a church full of people who knew the truth.

[5 : 40] Who spoke that truth and lived the truth. A church like that was going to adorn the gospel to those outside looking in.

A true mission church must be built up with Christians. Ordinary people. People like you and me. Who together not only proclaim the truth.

But adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. We must together live out the truth. Because to do so commends the gospel to those who see us day to day.

And living out the truth means according to Titus. As he's been reminding us throughout the letter means doing good works. Now last week our focus was on good living in the household setting.

Just look back over chapter 2. It talks about different groups of people in the household setting. Older men, younger men, older women, younger women. But this week Paul turns our attention to good living in the public arena.

[6 : 47] You'll notice the outward focus at the start of chapter 3. And Paul is telling Titus to remind the church about these things. They needed to be reminded.

And perhaps we need a reminder as well. We need to be reminded to be doing good in public. As well as at home and within the family church. We are to be adorning the gospel.

Not just in the church family. But out there in the world. We are to adorn the gospel. So three points this evening. Firstly, verses 1 and 2. Doing good means doing good for all people.

Doing good means doing good for all people. Remember what we've seen so far in the letter. Titus is there on Crete. Crete. It's a very unpromising place for the gospel.

Just look back again at that verse in chapter 1, verse 12. That was the sort of place that Crete was. Full of liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. But even there, even in a place like that, Paul was confident about gospel flourishing on Crete.

[7 : 55] How was that to happen? What was Paul's strategy for Crete? Well, it was simple. It was the appointment of good teachers who would hold firm to the truth.

Who would hold firm to the truth and refute error. Teachers who would teach the truth. And as we saw last week, who would insist on good and godly living in the household arena.

And now he broadens out the scope to good living in chapter 3. Christians on Crete. Christians here in Glasgow are to be devoting themselves to good works in public.

Exemplary behavior in the world out there. We're not to divorce truth declaration from truth demonstration. They come together. There's probably a tendency in us to go one way or the other.

We just focus all on declaration and ignore demonstration. Or we go the other way. It's all about demonstrating the gospel but not saying anything. But Paul says that both are needed.

[8 : 59] Both declaration and demonstration. Paul begins verse 1 with a narrow focus. He says, remind them, Titus, to be submissive to rulers and authorities.

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

And that means submitting to them. Obeying them. Now remember the culture on Crete. Known for its liars.

Its laziness. I don't suppose the politicians were a pleasant bunch. If you think we have it bad, listen to the assessment of the Cretan political class.

One historian said this. It was impossible to find personal conduct more treacherous or public policy more unjust than in Crete.

[9 : 58] Now imagine for a second that you're one of those Cretans who's received this letter. You hear it being read out. You think, come on, Paul.

Pull the other one. Have you seen what it's like here? The politicians are shot through with corruption. They're lazy. Huge temptation, I imagine, just to withdraw from that corrupt Cretan society.

To hunker down. To get into the Christian ghetto and launch gospel missiles into enemy territory every so often. But no. They are, says Paul, to be submissive.

To be obedient. To be ready for every good work. Even they. Even the guys on Crete. They are to be out there engaged with the governing authorities where they can.

To be model citizens. And not hiding away in endless church meetings. If that's the case for them on Crete. Where it's a sort of chapter 1 verse 12 place.

[11 : 04] How much more are we to be engaged, to be submitting? In our stable British democracy. Paul is clear.

Be submissive to the rulers and authorities. Be ready for every good work. Are you a model citizen in that regard? 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. He says, Speak evil of no one. Avoid quarreling. Be gentle. Show perfect courtesy towards all people. That sort of living is shaped by the gospel.

It is living that will stand out because it's just so unusual. Just think about the way people speak. How often do people seize a moment to speak badly of someone?

[12 : 09] Just spend a day in any office in Glasgow. And you'll hear little comments. Snide remarks. Someone who never speaks evil of anyone. Will stand out, won't they?

As we've seen in this letter, the truth leads to godliness. That you believe certain things about God. Will be evidence in the way you live your life. Not just in church. But out there in the world.

And it really matters. Your life will either adorn the gospel. Or distract from it. People, when they look at how you live. They'll either be attracted to find out more.

Or they'll be turned off. Wanting nothing more to know about it. So how can you live out the implications of the gospel in your day-to-day?

How can you do good in the context you live in? So that the gospel you declare is also demonstrated. Now it might look different depending on your situation.

[13 : 11] But what opportunities do you have to do good in your workplace? In your neighborhood? In the school that your children go to?

It's worth thinking about. Pondering. How can I adorn the gospel in my particular situation? With the particular people I know? And the particular responsibilities and abilities I have?

Think about your neighbors. We all have them. Unfortunately. I was speaking to someone not too long ago. Who organized a housewarming or a Christmas party.

I forget which. All the local neighbors were invited. But it was the first time that many of those neighbors had even met each other. They had a great time. They wanted to do it again.

That sort of thing is going to adorn the gospel. Carefully devote yourselves to good works. Such things are excellent and profitable for people.

[14 : 16] Perhaps you have an elderly neighbor. Who doesn't have too much of a clue about internet shopping or banking or whatever. Could you help them? Could you show them how to do it?

Carefully devote yourselves to good works. Such things are excellent and profitable for people. Perhaps you have a colleague who's just going through the mill at the moment.

He has a busy family life. His parents are quite elderly. They need lots of help. He has major deadlines coming up at work. Could you offer to babysit the kids one Saturday lunchtime?

Let him and his wife have some peace and quiet. Go out for lunch. Carefully devote yourselves to good works. Such things are excellent and profitable for people.

There's a vacancy on the local lawn bowls and croquet club organizing committee. Could you be involved? Could you liven it up?

[15 : 15] Create a bit of a buzz? Carefully devote yourselves to good works. Such things are excellent and profitable for people.

We can, by the way we live out there in public, we can adorn the gospel. We can demonstrate what we declare.

And it's in the everyday, ordinary stuff. Can we do good with the people that we know, in the places that we live, in the day to day?

Well, that's Paul's instruction to all Christians. Live good lives. Do good in the public arena, in terms of civic authorities, and in terms of everybody else.

Such good works, commend, adorn, beautify the gospel. But let me say what that doesn't mean.

[16 : 15] There's a careful distinction that needs to be made. A distinction between what the church is to do, and what individual Christians are to do. The church, as a corporate body, is to have a laser focus on mission, doesn't it?

Let me read you this little definition of mission I read in a book by Kevin DeYoung recently. It says, And that very well sums up what Titus is to do.

Paul tells Titus, in his role as church leader, not to go out and do all the good works that it's possible to do. No, he tells Titus to appoint leaders who will make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ.

He is to appoint men that will teach the truth. They are to teach the truth and insist on its implications. In other words, they are to make disciples.

And disciples do good, says Paul. Christians are to devote themselves to good works. Now, if a church misunderstands this, if a church thinks that it's its job to do all the good works, then the list of things would just be endless, wouldn't they?

[17 : 45] There are countless ways a church could do good. But if a church was to do lots of good things, then it wouldn't be doing the one thing that it must do, which is to make disciples by declaring the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So there's a distinction that we must make between what the church must do and what individual Christians can do. You can do much good in the world out there.

Go do it. But let's not expect the church as a corporate body to get on board and support it or validate it. That would just lead to chaos, wouldn't it?

And it would lead to a watering down of the very thing that enables you and equips you to do that very good thing in the first place. So if you have a great idea for some way in which you can do good, perhaps you want to start a book club for your neighbors as a way to show hospitality, get them to know each other, a way for you to love them and get to know them.

Opportunities of the gospel will come. Great. Go and do it. But don't expect the church to add it to the notice sheet or financially support it. We are to speak the truth and adorn the truth through doing good works.

[19 : 13] It is the church's job to equip us to do that. It's not there to do it for us. Social action, social justice is not something the church as an institution should do.

But rather, each of us, as individual Christians, we are to be living out the implications of the gospel. We are to be doing good in public.

We are to be doing good in the world out there. That is our job. But we wonder, how are we going to do that?

How are we ever going to live up to this command to be doing good? Well, in a similar pattern to chapter 2, Paul sets his commands alongside the great truths of the gospel.

Look on to verses 3 to 7 there. We see here that it is the gospel that is the engine that not only drives godliness in the home, but the gospel is also the engine that drives godliness in our public lives as well.

[20 : 24] And this is our second point. Good living, verses 3 to 7, is enabled by the gospel. And Paul, for the second time in this letter, sets out glorious gospel truths.

And he does it because knowing the salvation of the gospel, being reminded of it, enables us 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 us.

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

Knowing these things will lead to us doing good in the world around us. It is only because of the gospel truth that we are able to do the sort of good works that Titus speaks about.

[21 : 27] And we see in these verses a past, a present, and a future snapshot for the Christian. Verse 3, we see our past. For we ourselves were once foolish.

But on in verse 4, we see our present standing. When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us. So that, verse 7, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

This is the great transformation for the Christian from death to life eternal. Let me remind you of what you once were, says Paul, verse 3.

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 a fair reflection, isn't it? It's true of anyone. It's fair.

[22 : 35] But it's sobering. All of us were like that once, says Paul. Remember where you've come from. And as we remember, it's a great antidote to pride.

And any sort of superiority that might keep you from getting involved in the world around us. Imagine there was a great temptation for the Cretan Christians to look down on the society around them.

How awful. How can they behave in that way? Well, says Paul, there by the grace of God go you. Understanding where you've come from.

Will enable you to show mercy. To seek to get involved with the world around you. Rather than shrink back in horror. We seek to do good to all because that is what we used to be like.

Remember what you once were, says Paul. But let me remind of your present state. Verse 4. You have been saved. And it's all because of God's goodness.

[23 : 44] His loving kindness. His mercy. Nothing to do with anything you've done. Nothing. It's all his doing.

It's all his work on our behalf. Washed and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Given to us through Christ. You have been justified by his grace.

Here is what God has done for you. And it's just astonishing. The scale and the magnitude of what Christ has done for sinful human beings like you and I. Is just breathtaking.

Go and do likewise to your fellow man, says Paul.

Won't it be a powerful witness to the gospel if we are willing to do good to those who are undeserving? Just as we were undeserving of God's grace.

[24 : 42] Perhaps you're thinking of someone right now. Someone who really doesn't deserve your help. Consider for a moment God's grace shown to you.

A right understanding of the gospel leads to right living towards other people. We know our true state. We know what we once were.

And we know what we are now only because of his grace. So understanding that enables us to live good lives.

Lives that serve others and do good. And so we've seen that it is through the gospel alone that we are enabled to live good lives.

But our third point, we see our motivation. Good work, good living, good works is motivated by mission. Look on to verse 8 again.

[25 : 44] The saying is trustworthy. Referring to all that he's been saying. And I want you to insist on these things, Titus, 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 a repetition of a now familiar but crucial point in the letter.

Insist on the truth, Titus. In order that those who believe the truth, who trust in God, are careful to devote themselves to good works.

It crops up again and again and again through the letter. It's a big message of the letter. The truth leads to godliness.

Our lives, they must match our doctrine. What we say we believe must be backed up with our lives. And that means, according to this letter, doing good.

[26 : 43] Living the sort of lives that adorn the gospel. And that's where I want to focus our minds as we close. Just notice the very final sentence of this section.

These things, what he's just been saying about doing good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. This is the great mission purpose behind it all.

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. They'll adorn the gospel. They'll show its beauty. It will be excellent and profitable for them.

As people see your transformed lives. And experience undeserved kindness at your hands. They will more readily listen.

[27 : 46] They will more eagerly hear the words you utter. Words of truth and life. To quote James Philip on this.

He says, What will convince men is not bare doctrine. But the fact that it works. And that's true, isn't it?

You, each of us here in your life, are a demonstration that doctrine, that truth, works. It transforms.

I think back to a crucial year in my life. I took a year out between school and university.

University. And it was the witness of two men. Both of them are a bit older than me. And it was a witness of these two guys that convinced me, not only to take the Bible seriously, but also convinced me that there was something life-changing, transforming, contained in its pages.

[28 : 51] It wasn't just an interesting book. It was a book that transformed. In addition to what they said, as they shared the truth about Jesus Christ with me, I looked at the way they lived, the way they treated their possessions, the way they went out of their way for other people, including me.

I wanted to know the God, who is Lord of their lives. They adorned, as well as spoke, the gospel. And it was compelling.

Each of us, you here tonight, through your lips and through your life, are able to commend the gospel.

Often, it's in the very ordinary day-to-day slog. Often, it's the very ordinary acts of kindness and goodness that we are able to express to others.

Perhaps, no other Christian reaches the people that you do. You, each of us here, is the missionary arm of the church. So, will you dwell on the gospel afresh?

[30 : 13] Those wonderful truths in verses 3-7. Dwell on God's goodness, his loving kindness, his mercy poured out on us. In Jesus.

And will you live a life full of good works in glad response? And will you make that wonderful truth audible and visible to the world around?

That is Paul's instruction to Titus. It's his instruction for us. So, let us adorn the gospel out there. It adorns the gospel.

It shows, it demonstrates that the truth works. Let me pray. 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.

[31 : 27] Father, we do thank you so much for the wonders of your gospel of grace. We thank you on this Easter day we remember the resurrection of Christ our Lord and his resurrection guaranteeing righteousness for all those who believe in him.

Remind us afresh of the wonderful grace that you extend to all who place their trust in you and help us, Father, to live lives in response to your great loving kindness and might we live lives that adorn the gospel doing good not just to each other but to all so that your gospel may go forward grow that your name might be praised and honoured for we ask this in Jesus' name Amen.