

# Church Missions

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Jesus taught in Matthew 7, 20, that we will recognize true believers by their fruits. In keeping with Christ's teaching, then, Paul teaches us in this passage that as those who have been saved by grace, we should devote ourselves to good works. That's the main point of this passage.

And I will expound that in three points. First, he talks about doing good works. Second, he talks about speaking the good news. And then third, Paul talks about supporting the spread of the good news.

And doing good works in keeping with the good news of Jesus Christ has been the main theme of this whole book up to this point. And the repeated purpose that Paul's reiterated three times in chapter 2 has been, so that the word of God may not be reviled. So that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

So that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God, our Savior. So as you can see in those repeated purpose for the good works that we do, there's a concern, there's an outward orientation toward preserving the integrity, the credibility of our Christian witness to the watching world.

And that specific concern is continued throughout this chapter 3, and takes particular shape as Paul instructs the church on how to relate to governing authorities. And that's what we find here in verse 1.

[ 1 : 2 2 ] Remind them, it says in verse 1, to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work. Now, I want to remind you, two weeks ago I mentioned that in chapter 2, verse 13, Jesus was described as appearing, right?

He says, appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. So Paul spoke about that. And I mentioned at that time, two weeks ago, that the word appearing and the phrase, our great God and Savior, were both expressions that were typically used in the ancient world to refer to Greek kings and to Roman emperors.

They called these rulers great God and Savior, and they called them, their appearance, the appearing, the glory. And so when Paul appropriates that language and uses it and applies to Christ, he's intentionally drawing a contrast between Jesus Christ, the true king and ruler of all, true savior of all, from the worldly pretenders who seek to rule and save the people.

And so he is teaching us through that, that our ultimate allegiance in this life is to the Lord Jesus and not to any other rulers and authorities, ultimately. Having said that, Paul does not want the Christians in Crete to become known as an unruly and rebellious bunch, bad citizens that bring disrepute to the gospel of Jesus Christ, especially because the Christians in Crete were already known for that.

They were already stereotyped as being rebellious. So this teaching actually goes against the anti-authority grain of our culture as well, doesn't it? But scripture consistently, however, teaches, commands believers to be subject to the governing authorities, even to non-Christian ones.

[ 3 : 04 ] It says we are to be submissive to rulers and authorities, and it says we are to be obedient. In the 1830s, American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson captured the spirit of the age in a very appropriate way.

He said this, That still aptly captures the American ethos.

Our culture praises the indomitable rebel spirit, but scripture praises a humble, submissive spirit. But of course, our ultimate allegiance is to God and not to human institutions and authorities.

That's why in Acts 5, 17 to 42, when the apostles are apprehended and charged not to preach the name of Jesus to people, they respond by saying this, We must obey God rather than men.

So even though we are at times called to respond in this way, our posture toward governing authorities nevertheless must be submissiveness, not rebelliousness. Even when we disagree with our governing authorities, which often happens, we must be respectful, not disdainful.

[ 4 : 21 ] And even in our expression of formal dissent, we must show regard for them. Because prideful contempt, even for unjust rulers, it's not Christ-like.

And though we might win the applause of the crowd for a short time, in the long run, it will damage our witness and credibility as Christians. Not with just the people that watch us, but also with those very rulers whom we are also seeking to proclaim Christ to.

So then having given us that exhortation, Paul gives a general summary exhortation. He says, Once again, doing good works that's in keeping with the good news that we have come to believe is the main theme of Titus.

And he says we should be ready. Not unprepared. Not reluctant. But be ready for every good work.

And with this command, Paul moves on from speaking about how we should treat the governing authorities to more generally how we should treat the world, the people in the world. And that's this part of the good works that we're commanded to do as Christians.

[ 5 : 27 ] Paul gives some specific examples of these good works in verse 2. Read with me. He says, To speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

This is a command that applies to our conduct in general, and not specifically toward our governing authorities. That's why he says speak evil to no one. And that means we shouldn't insult or slander anyone.

But if you've been with us through this series in Titus, you might be wondering at this point. But I recall something Paul said in chapter 1. Let me go back and remind you what Paul said about...

These are the false teachers in Crete that he's talking about. He says, For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.

They must be silent, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for a shameful gain what they ought not to teach. One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.

[ 6 : 30 ] This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.

That's a zinger, isn't it? That's quite a severe critique from the apostle Paul himself. So then is he being hypocritical here when he says speak evil of no one?

I don't think that's the case because Paul's not saying that Christians should be naive and turn a blind eye to evil. We have a prophetic duty to denounce the sins and evils of our world.

And that's what Paul does in chapter 1. But even then, even as Paul does that, recognize that these false teachers that he's talking about are in the church as this letter is being read aloud. So he's addressing them directly, not just gossiping about them or slandering them behind them.

And he also says explicitly to Titus, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith. That's Paul's purpose in addressing them in this way. So what Paul's trying to do here when he says speak evil of no one, he's getting at a general human tendency to slander others.

[ 7 : 41 ] Because our selfishness, our pride, our insecurity, they create in us a tendency to speak evil of others. We tend to elevate ourselves by bringing others down.

Or we elevate someone else that we like in the presence of that person we want to bring down a notch. And we make ourselves look good at the expense of others.

Paul's saying, don't do that. Speak evil of no one. Similarly, Paul says to Titus, remind them to avoid quarreling, to be gentle. These two words are related and are paired together in 1 Timothy 3.3 as well.

So he says, don't be quarrelsome. There are people in this world, I think it's sometimes we can be guilty of this as well, but there are people in the world who seem to live with the chip on their shoulders.

It's almost as if they live with their arms up in this combative stance in everything they do. They're eager to contradict. They're argumentative, contentious, quibbling and bickering.

[ 8 : 50 ] But Paul says we are to avoid quarreling. We're also to be gentle. Gentle is a great word, but it doesn't quite capture the nuance of this word. It's the opposite really of being quarrelsome.

It describes someone who is magnanimous and reasonable. The same word in ancient Greek literature is used to refer to a personal quality of not insisting on the minutiae of the law, but instead being understanding and gracious toward people.

So Paul's saying, instead of being petty, be magnanimous. Instead of being combative, be peaceable. Instead of being contentious, be gracious with one another.

And as Christians, we are to show perfect courtesy toward all people, he says. We are to be humble and courteous rather than arrogant and rude. And we are to behave this way toward all people, not just to the rich and powerful, not just to the people we like, but to the poor and the weak and even to our enemies.

Show perfect courtesy toward all people. But these are difficult commands, right? Because our good works are not necessarily going to be reciprocated by the people we treat.

[ 10 : 06 ] People whom we are courteous to can be discourteous to us. People whom we are gracious to can be harsh toward us. People whom we take care not to speak evil of can say all kinds of evil things to our face and behind our back.

Knowing this, Paul gives a very highly insightful reason why we should behave this way toward the world. And this truth can sustain us when the going gets tough. And he says in verse 3, read with me, When we find ourselves frustrated with a sinful world, it's helpful to remember that we ourselves were once just like them.

The foolish person, he describes this person as a fool, right? We were once foolish. The foolish person in biblical terms is not someone that is unintelligent, but it's someone who has no spiritual understanding.

That's why Psalm 14 once says, The fool says in his heart, there is no God. That's a definition of a fool that the Bible provides. And there's a progression of sin actually in this list of descriptions because foolishness leads to disobedience.

It leads to being led astray. It leads to being slaves to various passions and pleasures and so on. Because when you are not acknowledging God as a fool, then we become disobedient to him because of course we're not recognizing him and his commands.

[ 11 : 40 ] And as we deviate from his command, disobey him, then we're led astray from God's good and perfect will. So we're led astray. And as we're led astray from God's good and perfect will, we become enslaved because we were created to worship.

And when we're not worshiping the true God whom we were created to worship, we end up worshiping other things. And we become enslaved to our passions and pleasures, have inordinate desires and lusts that rule our lives.

And when we become enslaved to these passions and pleasures, then we pass our days in malice and envy because we don't have everything we want. And we see others who have what we want. And so we become malicious and we envy that.

And that leads to hatred for one another, hated by others and hating one another. So that's the description of the life without God. And this is how every single human being in the world lives, regardless of how many good works that they do.

And without exception, every single one of believers, every single Christian once lived in this manner. And we are still battling sin, of course, as we fight for holiness. And so for this reason, he says, we are to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

[ 12 : 49 ] Because if you think about it, when we speak evil of others, when we quarrel with them and we fail to be magnanimous or gracious with them, when we fail to be courteous with them, it's because we do not humbly recognize that we're no better than them apart from the grace of God and the sanctifying work of God in our lives.

When we see others do foolish and wicked things, instead of selfishly, instead of saying in self-righteous disbelief, how can they do such a thing? I would never do such a thing.

We should think to ourselves instead, apart from the grace of God, I would be no better off and do just such a thing. That's why Paul gives that reason, because knowing where we came from, knowing what we are saved from, helps us to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

And God didn't save us. He's trying to remind us that God didn't save us because we were deserving, more deserving than other people, or more sincere than anyone else, or more moral than anyone else.

That's not why God saves us, but because of His sheer boundless grace. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[ 14 : 04 ] Romans 5a says, that's the truth that Paul is getting and reminding us of. Look at verse 4 with me. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us.

The appearing is referenced to the appearing of Jesus Christ, as in chapter 2.11, who is the ultimate, Jesus is the ultimate expression and fulfillment of the goodness and loving kindness of God the Father.

Even though we were fools, even though we were disobedient to Him, and even though we were slaves to sin, in spite of all of this, the goodness and loving kindness of God, our Savior appeared.

Those two words express God's posture toward us. Is that how you think of God? His posture toward you? Loving kindness? Goodness? In fact, the root meaning of the word loving kindness that's translated loving kindness here is literally love for people.

Isn't that a remarkable idea? Why would God, who is all-powerful, who created all of us, why would God love a creature?

[ 15 : 17 ] Comparably so insignificant. Why would He have love for people? Why would God, who is holy, who is perfect and just, why would He have love for sinful people?

But that's God's posture toward us. Loving kindness, goodness, love for people. And lest we miss the implication of this, Paul reiterates it in verse 5, emphasizes, 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. This is the heart of Christianity. This is what we call the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ.

We deserved God's wrath and eternal punishment, but God saved us, and the basis for our salvation was not our merit. It was not because of righteous works done by us, but according to God's own mercy.

And God saves us in this way so that we would have nothing to boast of in His presence. So let me ask you, if you think that you're a pretty good person, you try to live a moral life, and for that reason you think that God should let you into heaven, you are gravely mistaken.

[ 16 : 46 ] No one in the whole world is saved by his own righteousness. The only people whom God saves are those who humbly acknowledge their sinfulness, admit their failures, and abandon all claims of their own righteousness, and fall before the throne of God's mercy and plead.

Those are the people whom God saves. That's what it means to become a Christian. It requires humility. God saves us, not because of our works, but because of His own mercy.

And having told us why God saved us, because of His own mercy, He now tells us how God saves us, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

The washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit are really two parallel phrases that refer to the same work of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes people hear the word washing and they immediately think of baptism, while baptism is, of course, related sacrament, because that's what it represents, this new birth.

It's not what causes regeneration, which is the new birth in Christ, being made new creation. And that happens through the work of the Holy Spirit, which is what baptism represents.

[ 18 : 07 ] And even though that work can usually accompany baptism, that's baptism in and of itself is not what does that work. So it's the work of the Holy Spirit that Paul is referring to here. By the Spirit's powerful work, those who put their faith in Jesus Christ become new creatures.

They're regenerated. They are made new. This is where we get the expression, born again. We become born again into the family of God. And notice the language that Paul uses here.

The Holy Spirit, he says, Paul continues in verse 6, God poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ, our Savior. I love how that word, which consistently describes the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Holy Spirit to us, how lavish it is and how consistently it is that the Holy Spirit is described in this way.

The Holy Spirit is not given to us in drippings, in drizzles, but he's poured out. That's the Father's heart for us.

And he didn't do this frugally. He wasn't stingy. He did this richly. And the agent of that salvation, the one through whom this gift comes to us is Jesus Christ, our Savior.

[ 19 : 23 ] And once again, Paul's already twice before in this book, once in each chapter, he's described God the Father as Savior. And then, immediately on the heels of that, within one or two verses of that, he describes Jesus as Savior.

He applies the same title to Jesus to teach us that Jesus is the Son of God, that he is truly a deity, that he is God.

And actually, the verses 4 to 7 actually beautifully describe all three persons of the Trinity. Read with me again. It says, we believe in one God in three persons. That's the doctrine of the Trinity. And we see here that God the Father is the one who plans and initiates our salvation from eternity past.

And that God the Son is the one who accomplishes that salvation through his life, death, and resurrection on earth. And then the God the Spirit brings the effect of that salvation to bear on us, on our souls, and our lives.

So we see, wonderfully, the three persons of the Trinity, the entire Godhead, the triune God, working, lavishing on us, pouring out his grace, his love, to save us.

[ 20 : 29 ] And the goal of that salvation is this, verse 7. So that being justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

And the word justified is a verbal form of the word righteousness that was used earlier in verse 5. It's the exact same word. It's the legal language that means to declare righteous or to acquit from court, to declare innocent or declare righteous.

That's what it means to justify someone. And this repetition of the word highlights the contrast between our inadequate righteousness and God who sufficiently declares us righteous.

Because it said on the one hand, not because of works done by us in righteousness, our righteousness is willfully inadequate, but then it says we have been declared righteous, justified by God's grace.

Though we are not righteous, God declared us righteous. Because Christ as our substitute bore the punishment for our sins.

[ 21 : 44 ] Because his righteousness has now been counted as ours by God the Father and the judge of all creation. Because of that, even though we are not righteous, God declared us righteous so that we could become heirs.

Heirs of God the Father. Part of his family. And all of this good news that Paul carefully explains in verses 3 to 7 is the basis for Paul's exhortation in verses 1 to 2.

We're to do good works in this life because we have been saved by grace. And having exhorted Titus to remind the church in Crete to do good works, Paul now exhorts Titus to continue to speak the good news.

This is the second part. To continue to speak the good news that is the basis for these good works. He says in verse 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. The saying that he is referring to, the good news of God's salvation that he just declared is the saying that he's referring to.

[ 22 : 59 ] It's the good news that he outlined in the preceding verses. And in order to emphasize the importance of the good news and the reliability of the good news, Paul specifically confirms that this is trustworthy. This is a trustworthy saying.

You can stake your life on it. You can live according to this because this is a trustworthy saying is what Paul's teaching us. And then he says, I want you to insist on these things.

He mentions these things twice in that verse. And so the word saying is singular. The words these things are plural. So he's not referring to the saying when he says these things.

He's probably referring not only to the gospel that he preached but also to the ethical instruction in verses 1 to 2. That's a similar thing. He did a similar thing earlier in chapter 2 after he gave a series of instructions on the good works that the church is to do.

At the end of that chapter in chapter 2 verse 15 he said, declare these things. So once again, these things that Paul's speaking of here is not just the good news but also all the good works that we are to do in accordance with the truth of God.

[ 24 : 01 ] And he says, insist on these things. We're not merely to relay these things. Suggest these things.

Here's an optional thing. Here's a recommendation. No. He says, insist on these things. Because the good works that we are commended to do must never be divorced from the good news that we preach.

because we undo the credibility of the good news if we don't have good works to adorn it.

So these things, Paul says, are excellent and profitable for people. So Titus is to speak the good news. The converse then, of course, is true. If he's to speak the good news, to speak what is excellent and profitable, then he also should avoid speaking what is unprofitable and worthless.

So Paul says in verse 9, but avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

[ 25 : 10 ] It's the exact opposite of what Paul is teaching Titus to do. And earlier in chapter 1, we read how the false teachers in Crete were described as empty talkers and deceivers who devoted themselves to Jewish myths.

This is a direct contrast of that. They required outward ritual purity about the law. Notice these are all things that stem from Scripture because the law is the shorthand for the Old Testament.

So what Paul is saying here is that there's a way of studying, teaching, obsessing over different parts of Scripture that is itself unprofitable and worthless.

What kind of teaching is that? These are false teachers who are eager to tickle people's brains, stoke their own egos, stroke their own egos, and accumulate followers for themselves.

That's what these false teachers in Crete were doing. Rather than preaching the good news of Jesus Christ and the good works that Christ commands, Titus is not to engage with them in these foolish controversies.

[ 26 : 23 ] Rather, they were devoting themselves to Jewish myths. He says Titus is to teach the whole church to be careful to devote themselves to good works instead. We must take care to devote ourselves to these good works.

It's not something we do. It's not something that just happens carelessly, haphazardly, accidentally. We are to be careful to devote ourselves to these good works because we have beheld the excellence of Christ.

We should give ourselves to things that are excellent because we have profited from Christ and his gospel. We should give ourselves to what is profitable. But of course, simply avoiding foolish controversies ourselves isn't enough because as long as there remains those who engage in foolish controversies, there will still be problems in the church.

So Paul tells Titus how to deal with those who continue to lead people astray in verse 10 and 11. Asks for a person who stirs up division after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him.

Knowing that such a person is warped and sinful, he is self-condemned. Divisiveness is a serious sin that Paul warns against. Similarly in Romans 16, 17, he says, I appeal to you brothers to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught.

[ 27 : 45 ] Avoid them. Those who stubbornly refuse to listen to correction, they condemn themselves by doing that. And Titus, so Titus, Paul is telling Titus, and by implication the whole church, is to have nothing more to do with him.

This, of course, this is the very last resort. We talked about this process of church discipline when we were in 1 Corinthians. And Paul's already said in chapter 2, verse 13, to Titus, that he told Titus to rebuke these people sharply so that they may be sound in the faith.

Paul's hope is that they would repent. Paul's hope is that they would stop stirring up divisions. Paul's hope is that they would return to sound faith. That's the hope. And Paul's speaking with that love for them in mind.

But if they are incorrigible, they're not to be corrected, if their divisiveness threatens to destroy the entire church, in the same way, if you have an infected gangrenous arm that has to be amputated to save the whole body, you're to cut off Christian fellowship with this person.

So Titus is to continue to speak the good news. Then in verses 12 to 15, Paul gives some final instructions on how to care for the traveling missionaries, which is part of the good works that Paul's committing them to do.

[ 29 : 13 ] Supporting the spread of the good news, spreading the good news is part of the good works that we're called to do.