

THE BOOK OF TITUS - (Section 4 - Titus 2:15-3:15)

EVANGELISM THROUGH HOLY LIVING

Important Information

PASTORAL AUTHORITY HAS WEIGHT (V. 15)

Paul's admonition to Titus is clear. When you preach the truth of God's Word, the authority of God to shepherd the people is behind you as the pastor over God's church. Though brief, Paul's exhortation to Titus is incredibly forceful. First, preach the truth of God's Word and nothing else because then you will have the authority to steward the church. Second, encourage the obedient to greater obedience; rebuke those who are sinning with authority so that they will be corrected and guided to obedience. Paul is clear; don't let up! People are like sheep, and they need a shepherd to watch over them, guide them, herd them, drive them forward, and keep them from straying. The work of a pastor is never done. Third, don't let anyone ignore your guidance and leadership. Paul is not giving Titus a scepter of power to wield. Instead, he is laying on Titus the responsibility of shepherding the bride of Christ. This is a heavy responsibility, one that comes with the authority to carry out the task. Part of that authority gives a pastor that is grounded in God's Word the standing to insist that those under his care give heed to his leadership.

LIVING WITNESSES BEFORE A LOST WORLD (v. 1-2)

Through much of chapter 2, Paul focused on the internal workings of the church. He addressed how believers ought to conduct themselves within the context of the church. In chapter 3, Paul shifts the focus to how believers must conduct themselves in the context of living in this world. Believers are to have exemplary conduct in the public eye. This does not mean that they should be hypocrites, but that their conduct should be exemplary at all times so that whenever they interact with the world, either by design or by chance, the world will be exposed to conduct that

is righteous and holy in every way. What Paul lays out in verses 1 and 2 is the picture of a person who is humble and zealous for God in every facet of their life. They exhibit the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their heart, conduct, words, relationships, and profession.

NO RIGHT TO BE ARROGANT (V. 3)

Why should believers take such care to live out this testimony before the world? As far as Paul is concerned, the answer is quite simple. Before Jesus Christ changed the heart of the believer, they were exactly the same as the world. Believers who have been saved and transformed by the power of God have no right to act arrogantly toward the world. In fact, they have been given the ability to see what they truly were before God's work of salvation in their life, and this should motivate them all the more to live out a testimony of God's incredible work in their life.

LIVING EXAMPLES OF GOD'S POWER (V. 4-7)

As he so often does in his writings, Paul takes the opportunity to recount the incredible mercy, grace, sovereignty, and salvation of God for lost sinners. His statement, which covers verses 4-7 is a theological juggernaut, packed with innumerable truths and realities about the incredible power and goodness of God. Paul follows a clear line of worshiping and glorifying God in this restatement of God's salvific work for mankind. First, he glorifies God's power and position. Second, he attributes the work to God alone. Third, he positions man in his proper place, a non-participating recipient of the grace of God. Fourth, He points to the unique and specific role of each member of the Trinity, glorifying God as three in one. Finally, he points out God's purpose, which is to elevate those who have been saved to the position of heirs with Jesus Christ. As a result of God's work, believers, the recipients of His undeserved mercy and grace, have the hope of eternal life.

SERVE BECAUSE JESUS SERVED (V. 8)

Paul closes his emphatic restatement of God's great work of salvation by reaffirming the truth of his own statement and exhorting Titus to continue to teach the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul understands that it is only through the true teaching of the gospel and the Scriptures that the local church that Titus is responsible for will be motivated to do good to the world around them. In short, what Paul is saying is this, When believers are confronted with the truth of God's greatness, glory, majesty, and goodness, they have no choice but to worship Him, obey him, and live out lives that bring visible honor and glory to Him in full view of the world in which they live. Paul points out that living the kind of life he described in verses 1-2 is "excellent and profitable." Jesus set the ultimate example with His life, and Paul expects his churches to follow that example in living out a witness before the world.

VAIN DEBATE IS UNGODLY (V. 9)

Having dealt with how believers in the church should act and why they should act that way, Paul turns his attention to addressing issues within the church at Crete. It is important to understand that Paul is not condemning healthy discussion about the Scriptures or debate over difficult and complex theology. These things are healthy and, when entered into with a spirit of love, can bring much edification and blessing to those who work together to learn from the Scriptures.

Paul is specifically addressing meaningless superstitions, unfounded allegories, mysticism, and discussions about traditions and rabbinical law. In other words, the source of all of these debates is extra-biblical, i.e. not found within the teachings of Scripture. The issue is that, since these topics originate from man and not from God, they are error-prone and lead to division and dissension which is ungodly. Paul's instruction to the church is that they should focus on God's Word, which is without error.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE IS A NECESSARY TOOL OF LEADERSHIP (V. 10-11)

Paul once again charges his young pastor protege Titus with taking up the reins of leadership. Referring back to chapter one, he commands Titus to warn those who pursue ungodly debate twice, and if they do not respond in obedience, put them out of the church. This may seem like a disproportionate response by Paul; however, his reasoning makes sense. As Paul sees it, those who are functioning members of the church have been repeatedly exposed to solid teaching, good doctrine, and the Word of God. As members of the church, they have presumably put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. If, after having been exposed to the truth of God's Word and the hope of the gospel, a person repeatedly chose to pursue sinful mysticism and vain, ungodly debate over the life-giving Word of God, they were "self-condemned" because their actions showed that they valued controversy over truth.

A SEAL OF AUTHENTICITY (V. 12-15)

The final words of Paul's letter show modern-day readers several things. First, Paul cared about people. His priority was the people that made up the churches that he had founded. He was not a disconnected apostle writing letters out of a power-hungry heart simply because he wielded authority. Paul cared deeply about the individuals. He wanted the believers to grow so that they would have a deeper love for his, and their, Savior. He wanted the churches to grow so that more unbelievers would hear the gospel and be saved. He wanted the believers to live lives that glorify God with their lives so that no blasphemy would be thrown on the name of God because of the misconduct of a believer.

In addition, Paul's inclusion of such details shows the authenticity of his letters. The personal nature of these notes, the actual locations given, and the details recounted all speak to these letters being authored by a real person writing to real people about real places and events.

Key Verses

Saved to be Witnesses

Titus 3:1-2 - Paul wanted there to be no doubt in the minds of the Creten believers; their witness mattered. They had made a public declaration of faith, and now the world would be watching. He did not want them to act arrogantly, forgetting their unbelieving past by looking down on the lost society around them. Instead, Paul exhorted the believers to obedient living, motivated by a humble attitude that stemmed from the remembrance of their former unsaved hearts, for the purpose of being a witness to the lost world around them.

God Saved Us

Titus 3:5-6 - Paul is clear as to the focal point of action in the salvation process, and that is Jesus Christ. He does not want the believers at Crete to become arrogant in thinking that their obedience is going to be the key to saving lost souls; their purpose is to be witnesses of the power of God through the message of the gospel. However, all saving work is initiated, accomplished, and completed by the will and power of the Trinity.

Good Works are the “Work” of Kingdom Followers

Titus 3:8 - Kingdom followers have one overarching task in this life: devotion to good works. Paul is not telling the believers that they need to earn their salvation or add to their salvation. He is showing them that devotion to good works is the primary responsibility of one whose heart has been changed by the work of Jesus Christ. As James would explain in his epistle, good works are the by-product of a heart that has been changed for Jesus. Paul wanted these believers to understand that they had a purpose for which they had been saved. Their lives were not their own to live as they saw fit. God had called them to a life of righteous, obedient,

and holy living, the fruit of which is good works. Paul would go on to exhort his own ministry team with the same instruction in verse 14.

Key Words

Remind (*hypomimnēskō*) Titus 3:1

Meaning to cause one another to remember, to bring to mind, to admonish. Among the many responsibilities of a pastor is that of “reminding” his flock of their responsibility to live obediently before God. This verb denotes an ongoing action. Paul is not instructing Titus to remind the congregations under his charge one time, but repeatedly. This task of “reminding” goes hand in hand with the requirement that overseers of the church be able to teach. In other words, the pastor’s task of teaching the congregation is inexorably linked to the pastor’s responsibility to remind the flock of their responsibility to live obedient lives of witness before the world.

Quarrelling (*amachos*) Titus 3:2

Meaning to abstain from contentious conflict, not brawling, i.e., being peaceable. Paul did not want believers infighting. The discord he is expressly prohibiting stems from false doctrine. Paul knew that the result of believers embracing doctrines that did not stem from Scripture would be fighting, brawling, and contentious behavior. His teaching is clear; this behavior has no place in the family of God.

Regeneration (*paliggenesia*) Titus 3:5

Simply meaning “new birth.” Believers are not the same people they used to be. God has remade them to be totally new creatures. He has not fixed up, improved, or repurposed people; He has completely recreated them through salvation. Since believers’ hearts have been

“recreated or regenerated,” the result is that they are different people, new people, who cannot now go on living as sinful “unregenerate” people. This rebirth from spiritual death to spiritual life results in a new way of living.

Warped (*ekstrephō*) Titus 2:15

Perverted, twisted, or literally turned inside out. By using this word, Paul is trying to convey to his readers that those who continue to sow dissension and discord in the body of Christ are not regenerate. They are twisted, inside out, and perverted. In other words, they require the sovereign grace of God to effect any change in their hearts. This person needs salvation. Paul’s instruction for the church to disassociate from such people is not based on some hard-hearted elitist viewpoint of Christianity. Paul is focusing on the health of the church. This person who is causing disunity is an outsider, one who denies the faith. They are to be prayed for, loved, and even evangelized, but they are not to be counted among the redeemed family of God because their actions have shown them to be outside of the faith.

Cross-References

1 Timothy 5:20 (v. 15)

“As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.”

1 Timothy 4:12-13 (v. 15)

“Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.”

Titus 1:13-15 (v. 15)

“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.”

Romans 13:1-2 (v. 1)

“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.”

2 Timothy 2:20-22 (v. 1)

“Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”

1 Peter 2:13-17 (v. 1)

“Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.”

Ephesians 4:29-32 (v. 2)

“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

2 Timothy 2:23-26 (v. 2)

“Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.”

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (v. 3)

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

Romans 2:4 (v. 4)

“Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?”

John 3:5-8 (v. 5)

“Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Romans 12:1-2 (v. 5)

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Ephesians 2:4-10 (v. 5)

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

1 Peter 1:3-5 (v. 5)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,

who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Joel 2:28-29 (v. 6)

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.”

Acts 2:33 (v. 6)

“Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.”

Acts 10:44-48 (v. 6)

“While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.”

Romans 5:1-5 (. 6)

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character

produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

Romans 8:16-17 (v. 6,7)

“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”

Titus 2:11-14 (v. 7)

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”

1 Timothy 1:15-16 (v. 8)

“The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.”

1 Timothy 1:3-4 (v. 9)

“As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.”

1 Timothy 6:3-5 (v. 9)

If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.”

2 Timothy 2:14 (v. 9)

“Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers.”

2 Timothy 2:16-17a (v. 9)

“But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene.”

Matthew 18:15-17 (v. 10)

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

2 John 1:7-11 (v. 10)

“For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.”

Acts 18:24-28 (v. 13)

“Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.”

Philippians 1:9-11 (v. 14)

“And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

Colossians 1:9-12 (v. 14)

“And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

2 Peter 1:8 (v. 14)

“For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Application

Good Works are the Kingdom Follower's Primary Responsibility on Earth

God has redeemed a people to Himself to be a royal priesthood (1 Peter 1:29). The main function of a priesthood is to serve God. Paul's instructions to the churches in Crete to be devoted to good works reflect the instructions he gave to the churches in Corinth when he reminded them that they had been “bought with a price.” Paul would even go as far as to call himself a slave to righteousness in Romans 6.

It is quite plain to see the common theme in the writing of the Apostles with regard to the main responsibility of Kingdom Followers, which is to do the will of the Father! This concept was not of their own making but was derived directly from the teachings of Jesus. “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. (John 6:38)” Kingdom Followers are to be obsessed with doing the will of God for their lives, and this will, generally speaking, is that they are devoted to good works.

Good Works Manifest in Every Area of Life

Paul clearly spells out what is to be included in Kingdom followers' devotion to good works.

- They are to be submissive to their national leadership.
 - Paul expected the believers to be law-abiding citizens that followed the laws of their nation's leadership faithfully, save where those laws called on them to disobey God's law.
- They are to be obedient.
 - This open-ended call for obedience does not need to specify an authority figure. Obedience for Kingdom followers adheres to a simple structure—obedience to God and His word; obedience to government; obedience to church leadership; obedience to parents (for youth); obedience to conscience (in matters of personal conviction and ALWAYS subject to the specific teaching of God's Word).
- They are to be ready for good works.
 - This speaks to active waiting. The true Kingdom follower is so passionate about doing God's will that they are unwilling to be idle. They may still wait on God's direction, but during times of waiting, they are constantly aware of areas in which they can serve and needs that they can fill. It is often in the midst of this pursuit that God will bring new direction.
- They must shun all false theology.
 - Paul could not have been more firm on this point. Claiming believers who actively engage, revel in, and disseminate false theology to create division are not true Kingdom followers and are to be put out of the church. True Kingdom followers evaluate all teachings that they encounter against the Word of God, dismissing that which is false and embracing that which aligns itself completely with Scripture. Entertaining false theology is a sin at best, proof of an unsaved heart at worst.

Discussion Questions

Do you exhibit the qualities that Paul lays out in this chapter?

Are you being challenged by the leadership in your church to develop these qualities?

Is your life a visible testimony of the faith you claim to have in Jesus?

The words “self-controlled” appear four times in this chapter and apply to every group. Are you self-controlled?

Would you consider yourself “zealous for good works?”