

Titus 3 • Careful to devote ourselves to good works

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Titus chapter 3. I'm going to read through the chapter. Follow along with me as I do, I'm reading out of the ESV. It says,

¹Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ²to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. ³For 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. ⁴But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he 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, ⁶whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. ⁸The 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. ⁹But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. ¹⁰As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, ¹¹knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

Final Instructions and Greetings

¹²When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. ¹³Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. ¹⁴And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.

¹⁵All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace be with you all.

Let's pray. Father, as we complete this last chapter of Paul's letter to Titus, we pray for your Holy Spirit as always to illuminate our hearts. But Lord, we pray that you would help us to understand what you are saying to us in this chapter and how we can best apply it to our lives.

We thank you that Your Word is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword. We thank you, Father, that it feeds us and nourishes us, and fills us with insight and understanding, and we thank you, God for the grace that you give us to be able to lay hold of the truths that are expressed here in this letter. Thank you for giving us Lord your Spirit. Lead us today in the way of truth and teach us according to Your Word, in Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

All right. This final chapter in Paul's letter to Titus, who was on the island of Crete, ministering there as a church leader, really is made up of like about four sections, and I decided to kind of outline them, so I'll put it up on the screen for you so you can see it.

Titus Chapter 3

- Exhortation for Titus to remind the believers to devote themselves to good works,
- A reminder of our position in Christ as heirs according to the hope of eternal life,
- A reminder to Titus about what to personally avoid
- Final instructions and greetings

Essentially what we're going to see here is first of all, an exhortation for Titus as the leader of the fellowship there to remind the believers to devote themselves to good works. Next, he gives a reminder of the fact that we are heirs according to the hope of eternal life, which is our position in Christ, and what a wonderful thing that is. We'll talk about that.

He also then takes a moment to kind of challenge and remind Titus about things that he needs to steer clear of that are only going to be problematic for him. And then finally he gives some final instructions and then those final greetings of the letter. But if you had to write down a theme, if somebody asked you, what's the letter of Titus really all about?

Why did Paul write to Titus? Well, the main theme of this letter is good works, doing good works. Now I want to pause there for just a moment. When I mention good works, I'm interested in what goes through your mind? And I'm not asking you to speak up obviously, but I want you to, I want you to think

about it. Because over the years I've come to learn that this topic or subject of good works makes many Christians uncomfortable.

And I suppose it's probably because of conviction, some because of just frustration. Some people find the topic of holy living, let's call it what it is, to be even a little bit scary. And the reason it's scary for some is because they realize they don't measure up and they see things in the word about how we are to live as believers and they read it and they kind of go, "Yeah, well, that really doesn't describe me very well."

And so they begin to think, "Well maybe this Christian thing doesn't work for people like me." Or something like that. And it doesn't take long before the enemy begins to lay hold of that doubt, and he begins to interject the idea that, well, maybe you're not really saved, and that's why you struggle so much in this area of transformation and living a different kind of a life.

I didn't know how pervasive this was until I began to kind of open myself to the thoughts and concerns of other people. So if you're one of those people who when we talk about good works you kind of start to get a little bit uncomfortable or even maybe discouraged about how you've been living, I want to challenge you this morning that perhaps you're thinking wrongly about this, and I'll tell you why.

The biggest mistake that I have seen people make as it relates to whenever you hear or read in the Bible something about holy living and living the life of Christ, living the life of a believer. If that causes you challenges and so forth the mistake that I see people making is assuming that those passages are basically telling you that God wants you to just try harder.

Because that's not what God is saying. But I've come to understand that's the way a good many people actually interpret it. And they hear how they're supposed to live from the word and their response is essentially, "Well, I guess I'm just going to have to kind of buckle down and do better." Kind of the old pull myself up by the bootstraps routine.

The problem with that is it doesn't work. It just flat out doesn't work. There's an important little element that is, is needful in our understanding of what the Bible says related to good works and our calling to walk in them and let's again, let's call it what it is, holy living, set apart living.

Here's that little element. You aren't holy. There's nothing in you apart from God that is holy. Now, I had to come to terms with that I did at a particular

point in my Christian life, and I'll tell you something, it really kind of set me free. Because not to get me off the hook in a sense, but for me to realize I don't have the goods.

I don't personally. Paul does not possess the ability to live a holy life apart from God and apart from what the Lord... If there's any holiness that you ever see in my life, it was deposited in me by God. It doesn't originate in this man at all. Now, that's an important thing because it helps me to understand that when I see in the Word that I am called to a holy life, that I'm called to holy living.

It's not saying to me, Paul, pull yourself up by the bootstraps and try harder. It's not what it's saying. What is it saying? It is God saying to me, I have given you everything you need for life and godliness. Now what you need to do, son, is you need to learn how to resist the impulses of the sinful nature, which are still there, unfortunately, and they'll still be with us until we're with the Lord one way or another.

But you need to learn, He says to me, to resist the impulses of your flesh and yield to the impulses and the leading of my spirit within you because you see, I've given you a spirit of holiness. He is called the Holy Spirit, and he now lives in all of us who by faith, have received Christ as our savior.

He's the one who's holy. Here's what's cool. He's expressing his holiness through us, through changed and transformed lives. Not changed all at once. In fact, we spend our entire lives learning to do two things. Resist the flesh, yield to the spirit. I'm 64 years old. I feel like I'm just getting started learning how to do those things, and I know that I will spend the rest of my days on earth continuing to learn and to struggle to resist the impulses of the sinful nature and yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

And that is the Christian life, right? It's not a perfect one by any stretch. Thank God we can come when we mess up to the throne of grace and say, "Me again. I did it again." Thank you for your forgiveness. Thank you for the perpetual spring of forgiveness that is ours in Jesus, right?

Do you know that His blood keeps on forgiving you? It keeps going on and on because of your faith in his finished work on the cross. So it is so important that we get this through our hearts and our minds when we're dealing with this topic of holy living because otherwise, we're going to look at it and we're going to get discouraged.

Because I look at my life and I know that I'm not a holy man, and yet I'm called to that holy life, I'm called, so are you. And so instead of sitting and kind of getting down on myself and going, "Oh man, I tell you, it's not working."

I need to remember that it's His work in me. Because like I said, if you don't understand this, if you don't get this, the enemy is going to get ahold of your heart and he will bring such discouragement and such a doubt that he will actually get you to the place, if you focus on yourself and your mistakes and the fact that you don't measure up, you will eventually get to the point where you will doubt your very salvation.

And the enemy is the one who brings that doubt into your heart and mind, and he loves to do it. And it is a particularly destructive doubt. I would be a wealthy man if I had a dollar for everybody who came to me and because they knew they didn't measure up, they doubted their salvation.

I tell them the first thing I say, "Right first of all, let me just, let's get something out of the way. Okay? Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins? And have you received his death, his sacrificial death on your behalf?"

"Oh, yes I have."

"Okay. Alright. We got that settled. So according to the Bible, you are a born-again child of God based on that and that alone, okay?"

That's so important that we come back to that. Because when people begin to doubt their salvation, because they know they don't measure up, they have created a playground for the devil to wreak havoc in their hearts.

I mean, they have opened up their lives to the work of the enemy that is incredibly destructive. Christians, we can't do that. You cannot do that. You cannot open your heart to that kind of doubt because it will eat you alive. He will eat you alive. Very important. Listen, you are saved by grace through faith, this not of yourselves it is the gift of God. (Ephesians 2:8)

And we have to settle that in our hearts and minds. Otherwise, we're going to be fodder for the enemy. So since we're finishing up this last chapter with continuing emphasis on good works, you understand now as we go into these verses, this is not God telling you to try harder. This is the Lord saying, "Listen, I know you're kind of a mess up, okay? But I've given you everything you need for godliness."

So here we go. Verse one comes out swinging. He says, “*remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities.*” Well, this was a toughie during the pandemic, wasn't it? For the church.

I mean, it became a mess. I don't know if you're aware of it or not. I don't know if you...maybe you...I'm sure you were. But it, it just, we messed up with this with a vengeance. Anybody who's ever read their Bible knows and understands that this is only one of a few passages in the Bible where we are told to obey the government.

We are to obey the government as believers, we are to be obedient to the governing authorities. Well, the problem during the pandemic, or the problem that came up during the pandemic was of course, that many church leaders felt that all of the restrictions that were being handed down, by the governing authorities were in fact causing them to disobey God, right? And it created a mess.

And in some parts of the country, and even around the world, it's still messy. And the mess is kind of going on. There are lawsuits, there are fines, there are all kinds of things that are going on that have not yet been completely resolved. Let me explain something about, and this is important to understand, going into this, explaining something to you about Biblical submission and obedience.

Now, we talked about submission from the standpoint of a of a wife to her husband last week, and if you missed that, I encourage you to get that teaching from [our website](#) because it is important to understand what biblical submission is. But make no mistake about it, we are not, it is not just wives who are called to submit to their husbands, we are called to submit to the governing authorities as believers, okay?

Now it's really the same sort of a submission process that a wife uses to submit to her husband. Does she submit to him even when he asks her to do things that are illegal, immoral, or unbiblical? No, of course not. I've had wives ask me “My husband wants me to be, sign my name on the tax thing and we're cheating. We're cheating on our taxes. Am I to? Is this biblical submission? Does that mean I have to go along with that?” No, absolutely not. No.

See, it's not absolute. Biblical submission is a willing, as we said last week, subordination to the recognition of leadership. However, if that leadership, whether it be a husband or the governing authorities, asks you to do something that is contrary to the Word of God to a specific and clear directive from God, it

is immoral. It is illegal, it is unbiblical. You are under no obligation to obey or to respond favorably to that, okay?

Now that's an important thing to understand. We call it civil disobedience. I don't really care for that name because we're really being obedient to God. We should call it godly obedience, I suppose. But the reason it's important for us to understand that is because it really plays heavily into this whole issue.

And a lot of Christians don't understand it, and that's why I think there was a lot of infighting among believers in the last two years about how churches were or were not responding to what was going on in the world or particularly in our country. So first of all, where is the biblical validation for this sort of an idea of obedience that, that believers have to God, which trumps that of the demands of men?

Well, it's actually in the book of Acts. Do you remember when Peter and John were out ministering, and they healed a guy, and they were preaching in the name of Jesus and they got hauled in before the authorities, right? Remember? And they didn't know what to do with these guys. Exactly. Well, let me show you this from Acts chapter 4, beginning at verse 18. Here's what it says.

Acts 4:18-20 (ESV)

So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."

So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus, but Peter and John answered them. (Listen to this answer) Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than God you must judge for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.

You see, this is one example of what we are talking about here. When the governing authorities ask us to do something that is contrary to what God has told us to do or not to do, it can go either way, all right?

And so many people during the pandemic, I heard so many people quote the Apostle Paul here from Titus, or Peter talks about obeying the governing authorities. Paul refers to it also in, in the book of Romans chapter 13. You look at verse 1, he, we don't have to look at it this morning, but you can make a note of it if you want to. Paul talks about how we need to obey the governing authorities, and it's clear from the Word of God that we are to obey the

governing authorities. And people were using that verse to beat people over the head. You know what they didn't stop and think about? That Paul was in prison because he had disobeyed the governing authorities.

The same man who wrote and said, we are to obey the governing authorities was in prison because he was doing what they didn't want him to do. He ultimately was beheaded in prison because he was doing what they didn't want him to do. Was Paul living a contradiction? No. The idea has always been understood. We obey the governing authorities until they step over the line. What's the line? The Word of God. Simple as that.

Now, I'm not going to get into all the ins and outs of why some church leaders felt like the restrictions that were given to them or handed them during the pandemic were necessarily contrary to the Word of God. Because I know that there are still some disagreements related to that among the body of Christ.

What I wanted to do really is just kind of give you the premise that is behind, and I guess the validation, if you will, that is behind the idea that we answer to a higher authority as believers. It has to be that way. It has to be that way. Because you know, what happens if somebody comes along and tells you to do something and that's contrary to the will of God, do you have to obey them?

Is that what God's Word says? You have to obey no matter what? If somebody tells you to commit murder or steal from someone illegally or to do this or that, do you have to? Of course not. You obey God. He is the highest authority there is. Now the highest authority who is, God, told you and me to obey the governing authorities insofar as they don't ask us to violate His Word, okay? That's what we're basically saying here.

So and as long as that doesn't happen, we are to be some of the most obedient people on the face of the earth. And I mean that. Christians, we, and this is another thing, this whole thing of civil disobedience or whatever you want to call it, this isn't rebellion. This isn't us thumbing our nose at the government saying, you can't tell us what to do. You're not the boss of me, like a child would say. We're not, this is not rebellion. This is obedience to God. You see the difference? It's very important that we understand that.

Now, Paul goes on in verse 2 to talk about the way Titus is to encourage the body of Christ. He says encourage them, “² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.”(ESV) Now again, we're talking about good works. These are the things that we're

called to do. Let me ask you a question. Don't speak out, but here's the thing I want you to consider.

How are we doing? How are we doing on these things? Speaking evil of no one, and particularly your brothers and sisters in Christ. But it isn't even mentioned here that this is just for people in the body. You are to speak evil of no one, and you are to show courtesy to everyone, in addition to avoiding quarreling and always being gentle.

Think about if we would've obeyed this verse on social media when people were passionately talking about things related to the pandemic and what they should and shouldn't have to do? Wouldn't that have been delightful if we would've always spoken evil of no one, avoided all quarreling, walked in total gentle actions and attitudes toward people and shown courtesy? Wouldn't it have been a different internet?

It would've. Fact of the matter is we failed pretty miserably at this one. Yeah, we did. But it's the way we ought to live. But do you know why we messed up? It's because what we did came out of our carnality, not from the spirit. If we were truly walking in the spirit, we would've spoken evil of no one. We would've avoided all quarreling. We would've been gentle, and we would've expressed courtesy, shown courtesy to everybody.

That's the life of the spirit, right? There are no hateful words in the life of the spirit. Because you see the life of the spirit is the opposite of the carnal nature. Let me say that again. The life of the spirit is the opposite of your sinful, carnal nature. And that's what Paul reminds us of next in verse 3. Look at me in your Bible. He says, for we ourselves were once that way. We lived according to our carnality, didn't we?

I mean, we just, we always... Look, he talks about the things that used to dominate our lives. He said we were foolish. We were disobedient. We were led astray constantly. He says we were slaves of our passions, various passions and our pleasures. We lived for our passions and pleasures, and so we became enslaved to those things.

He says, we passed our days in malice and envy, hating, hated by others and hating one another. People hate me and I hate them back. That's the way we lived. That's the way the world lives. That is the carnality of man's flesh. Whether he shows it in certain ways or not, it's there. It's in his heart, and we're to have no part of it. So we're not to live like the world.

And then Paul explains why in verse 4, he talks about when the goodness and loving kindness of God our savior appeared. What happened? He says He saved us. And by the way, He saved us, not because of anything we had done to earn that salvation, but He saved us according to what? What does he say there? Mercy. He saved us according to His mercy.

Do you know there's not going to be ever one person, ever, one person in heaven who says, "I'm here because I earned a place to be here." Not one single person, every single one of us is going to say, "I'm here because of God's mercy." Do you guys remember what Mercy is? The definition of mercy?

It's not getting what I do deserve. Because what I deserve is the hottest corner of hell. But I don't get that because of God's mercy. And that's what this passage says. He saved us, not because we'd done anything good to earn that salvation, but because of His mercy. And I love that.

So he goes on here to talk about the works that we're supposed to do now that we are saved. See, that's the thing that really kind of messes, I think, some Christians up, because the Bible does talk a lot about good works. But then it repeats over and over again we're not saved by good works, but it says, yeah, but do good. You're not saved by being good but do good.

And they, all they see is the do good, do good, do good, do good. And they think well, I've got to do good to be in heaven, to get there. No, no, no, no, no. You see, do you understand? After someone is saved, then the Bible says, do good. After you're saved and you don't do good to keep yourself saved, either. You do good because you're supposed to give glory to God and live out the life that He's called you to live in the power of the spirit.

You ever remember what Paul said to the Ephesians about the good things that we're supposed to do? Let me show you this on the screen.

Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)

...we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

He says, "...we are his workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." It's a fascinating verse because it tells us that we were created for good works.

We were created to live in such a way as to bring glory to our Heavenly Father, and He even gave us good works that He prepared in advance. He prepared

them for you. You don't even have to go looking for them. They've been prepared. It's pretty crazy. So you and I have been created to do good works.

Paul also says in the middle of verse 5, look there with me. He talks about how you've been saved “*by the washing of regeneration.*” Don't ever think that's the washing of the waters of water baptism. You're not washed spiritually by the waters of water baptism. You are cleansed and washed by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ being applied to your heart by faith. Water baptism symbolizes that washing.

It is a beautiful symbol, and we've talked about it's a multifaceted symbol. But that's one of the things that it symbolizes is that you've been washed and cleansed, but it's not the waters of baptism that does it. It's Jesus that does it through His death on the cross. He also talks about the “*renewal of the Holy Spirit.*” And that's an interesting word, that word renewal. It, and it means being made new. You've been made new.

That's where we get the idea. Renewal, made new. You've been made new. Do you know I find that Christians lose sight of that all the time. That we've been made new. And I understand why. It all comes back down to when we get fixated on my mistakes and I mean, fixated to the point where I've kind of, that's all I'm looking at is my mistakes. I'm so bummed and I'm so disgusted and I'm guilty. I just feel guilt and condemnation because of the, the mistakes I've made.

Well, that condemnation comes from the enemy it doesn't come from God. So you're being condemned and he's just heaping it on you and you're just fixated. And that's all you can think about is that you're just kind of a scumbag. That's it. That's as far as it goes with you. And I have to remind people, do you realize that you've been made new? And they're kind of like, “What?” Because they've lost sight of it. All they can see is the old.

Do you know one of the passages that I quote most often with people is in second Corinthians 5:17. Let me show you on the screen.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

If anyone in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. That's what God wants you to understand. You are a new creation. The renewal of the Holy Spirit has taken place in your life. I know it's

not perfect. I know you still mess up. I know sin continues to hound you and tempt you. I know that.

That's not the point. God never said you are going to be perfect this side of glory. But he did say that you're a new creation. He has made you new. And I honestly, I think every believer ought to wake up in the morning and just say, thank God I am a new creation. Can you imagine? Can you imagine what our hearts might be like if we did that? If we woke up every single morning and the first thing out of our mouth is "Lord, thank you. I am a new creation in Christ. The old is gone. The new has come."

Just think about that for a minute. What would that do to you? It can be life changing. You see, it's the enemy that wants you to think you're stuck back in the old life. The enemy desperately wants you because he knows you're a believer, he wants to just upset the entire apple cart of your life by getting you to fixate on your mistakes and the old rottenness of the sinful nature so that you'll become discouraged, and you'll give up.

And it's God who is saying to you, my child, I've made you new. You are a new creation in Christ Jesus, my son, live out, walk out that new creation. We tend to act the way we think we are. Now speaking of the Holy Spirit, look in verse 6, Paul talks about how the Holy Spirit has been "*poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ, our savior.*" He didn't just kind of give you a futile dribble. He poured out the spirit richly on you.

Okay, so that, verse 7, "*being justified by his grace,*" and the Greek word justified is a legal term. It was used in the legal system, but it meant it is just as if you've never sinned. It literally is a word meaning acquittal. To be acquitted, if you will. So he's basically saying here, so that having been acquitted of all wrongdoing by His grace, you might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

And the reason I like this passage so much is it's talking about my inheritance. Now, once again, I've got to tell you that the enemy wants to speak to you about this too, but he wants to talk to you about your adamic inheritance. Because you see every single one of us, when we were born, we inherited something from Adam, and that is a sinful nature.

And it shows up from our earliest days. And that sinful nature makes us completely self-focused, self-centered, and self-aware, right? And the enemy wants to keep putting that on you and reminding you that is your inheritance. But the fact of the matter is you have a new inheritance, and your inheritance

through grace has come from God and you are now heirs, joint heirs with Christ, the Bible says.

And I know that the only reason you're still seated right now is because we really can't wrap our minds around what that means. If we could, you'd be up from your chair jumping up and down and whooping and hollering like your favorite team just got a touchdown.

I'm serious. If we could wrap our mind around what it means to have an inheritance in Christ. Well, you're going to know one day and you are going to jump up and down and whoop and holler. For right now we accept it by faith, right? But we accept it from the standpoint that I'm not going to let the enemy keep telling me or talking to me about my carnal inheritance, the inheritance of sin.

But I am going to be in that new creation in Christ that God's called me to be. And remember that he has given me an inheritance, which is the hope of eternal life and all that goes along with it.

Man, I hope you don't think I'm harping on this too much, but I talk to some people who have been so swayed by the enemy related to what they've gotten their minds fixed on that they can't see the good. They can't see the, even what the word says anymore. All they can see is themselves. And do you know that's a pretty depressing thing to think about. I was telling somebody just yesterday, the last person I want to be alone with is me.

The world talks about looking inside. "You just really need to look inside of yourself." No, you don't. Oh, I tell you, there's a, there's an abyss of darkness in there. You need to keep your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith, right? Because that's what's going to set you free.

The more you look at self, the more dark it becomes. And that darkness can become very overwhelming. And I've, like I said, I've talked to some people and they'll write me a note or talk to me and just say, "My sin, my, I'm just, I'm terrible. I've done this and I've done this and I've done this."

And I come back and say, "Let me tell you what Jesus did on the cross to save you from your sin."

And I go through and I explain that, and they come right back with, "But my sin, my sin."

I keep coming back, “But the savior, the savior”

And you know what? Some of them can't get it. Some of them can't get there. Some of them cannot leave their darkness behind to look into the eyes of the savior, and it's incredibly sad, but it's the work of the enemy and it's a very effective work that he has done.

Paul goes on here, verse 8. He says, “*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.*” (ESV) Okay, so good works. These are excellent and profitable.

What isn't excellent and profitable? Paul then gives Titus a word of warning. He says, “*But avoid foolish controversies.*” Okay? Most controversies, I would say most controversies are foolish. Really and especially our fixation with them and our, the time we spend talking about them over and solving nothing.

Have you ever noticed that? It's like, well, let's talk about this controversy. It's like, let's not. But it's just it's just so foolish. He goes on to talk about genealogies. I don't know if that's a big deal to you or not, it was in ancient times to kind of prove through your genealogy that you're better than somebody else.

It's all couched in pride. He says avoid dissensions. And dissensions are anything that divides people. When somebody walks into a room just to divide people just say things just to get them riled up. Anyway, quarrels about the law. That still goes on today a lot. Here's what he says about those things. He says they're unprofitable and worthless. Those are good words.

And then he gives Titus a couple of verses here in the way of a warning about people who bring that kind of dissension into the church. He says, as for the person who stirs up that kind of stuff, Warn him. Warn him strongly, and then warn him again. And after that, have nothing to do with him because you know that you've warned him and you've told him that is contrary to the work of God among his people. And if he refuses to listen, you know you have someone in your midst who has no intention of walking in obedience to the Holy Spirit and you have nothing to do with them.

Now he's not telling him to kick him to the curb necessarily or to be mean to him or whatever. He's basically saying, have nothing to do with the guy. Just let the Lord have him. Let the Lord just hand him over to the Lord. Let the Lord take care of it.

That doesn't, I want you to know something about what I just said about handing people over to the Lord or just letting God take care of people who are troublesome in our lives. That's very difficult for us to do. Our flesh wants to try to fix people. If you're thinking wrong, it's like I'm going to get inside your head and fix you. Do you know that most married couples spend the entirety of their married years trying to fix the other person?

Women are trying to get men to think like women. It's not going to work, ladies. Yeah. We will never think like women. We might talk like them sometimes when we're being silly, but we will never, I've been married 43 years. My wife is a mystery to me. I'm telling you right now. But see, it's the other way too.

She doesn't think like me. And she never will. And it is an absolute fruitless act on my part to try to get her to think like me. Well, we're that way with people in general. I'm going to get in and make you think like me, I'm going to fix you, whatever the situation might be. Do you know that turning someone over to God is actually better?

Do you know that He's actually good at dealing with people? I know that's probably a shock to some of you. He's actually good at what He does. You ought to trust Him. If somebody's really giving you some grief and you're just getting nowhere, turn them over to the Lord and pray about it and say, Lord, I give this person to you, and I ask you to do that work because obviously I'm not getting anything accomplished.

The last verses here are really just kind of some instructions for Titus. He says, when I send Artemis and Tychicus, which gives you the idea that they were maybe coming to replace Titus there on the island of Crete, because he says, when they, when I send these guys to you, do your best to come to me. And he says, I'll be at Nicopolis.

And that's a, that was a town on the coast of Greece. There was actually three towns during that time that were called Nicopolis but this is the one we think he probably was at. And he goes on to say, *“for, I have decided to spend the winter there.”* And then he says in verse 13, *“Do your best to speed. Zenas the lawyer”,* who we know nothing about, *“and Apollos”* who we know some about *“on their way; see that they lacked nothing.”* (ESV)

Apparently these two are maybe going to be passing through Crete and Titus was told to give them ample provisions to send them on their way. Verse 14, he throws out one final reminder and says, *“let our people learn to devote*

themselves to good works.” There it is again. *“So as to help cases of urgent need and not be unfruitful.”* (ESV)

Notice that the reason Paul tells Titus to encourage the people to walk in good works here is because it is helpful to those who are going through hard time. Remember, for the people in the body of Christ, the church itself was its own welfare system. There was no government welfare program. So if somebody was, on hard times or finding it difficult to do this or that, or didn't have food to eat, it was up to the fellow believers in Christ to take care of them.

And I kind of like that. I think we've gotten way too lazy. My personal opinion, which doesn't mean anything. But I think we've kind of just started relying on the government. “The government will take care of them.” But here's what's interesting about what Paul's saying. He says, if you're careful to encourage the people to walk in good works toward the others who are having a struggle, their lives won't be unfruitful. Catch that? Their lives won't be unfruitful.

I say that because I want you to ask yourself the question, is your life fruitful for the kingdom of God? I see people from time to time that are just, I mean, you can tell by looking at them sometimes, and you can certainly tell by talking to them, that they've just lived a very hard life. They're broken. But not in a good way. And their lives are like pretty much used up. And you have to kind of wonder, are you going to go to your grave never, ever having been fruitful?

Because you see we're put here for a purpose. We talked about this before. We're put here for a purpose. And it's not just to live for ourselves. We're here to be fruitful, for the Lord. So how are you doing? Are you being fruitful in the way that you live your life?

Paul is telling Tim or Titus here to remind the people to be generous in their attitudes to our others, so that their lives will be fruitful. And then finally, verse 15, *“all who are with me, send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace, be with you all.”*

And with that, we close out Paul's letter to Titus. Let's stand together.

As we typically do we'll have some people down front here to pray with anyone who needs prayer. We're not going to be meeting here again on Wednesday. We won't have a Wednesday service because it's right before Christmas. But we really do hope to see you on Christmas Eve and it is a really special time and it's short.

If you have never been to one of our Christmas Eve services, it's not long because we have all the kids in here with us and they can't take long. And we know that. And here's the other cool thing. In the past years we've done treat bags for the kids and I decided we're going to do treat bags for everybody.

Yeah. So yeah. So everybody gets a treat bag. We're making up 500 treat bags. I kid you not and if you don't come, that's just a lot of candy I have to eat on my own. So save me the dental bills and come. So let's pray.

Father, I thank you so much for the power of Your Word. I thank you for the book of Titus. I thank you, Lord, for the wonderful reminders that we have in it. Lord, help us to just continue to resist the carnal nature and to yield to your spirit. Help us Lord, to walk in the power of the spirit, always to live the life that you've called us to live, to bring glory to your name. And I pray, my Father, God, that we would be obedient to you every day.

That we would live fruitful lives fruitfully living for the Lord, bearing fruit for the kingdom of God. Thank you, Lord, for these reminders. Bless and keep your people. We say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, and all God's people said, amen.

God bless you. Have a good rest of your Sunday.