

A Foundation for Doing Good (Titus 3)

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[0 : 0 0] Titus 3 Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle towards everyone.

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

This is a trustworthy saying, and I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.

These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.

[1 : 2 0] Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful. They are self-condemned.

As soon as I send Artemis or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to winter there. Do everything you can to help Xenas the Lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need.

Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives. Everyone with me sends you greetings.

Greet those who love us in their faith. Grace be with you all. Thank you, Eden, for that reading.

Yeah, it's lovely. Hello again. Oh, by the way, Eden is also responsible for today's coloring page, so if you were one of the lucky few to get one, you can enjoy coloring to our memory verse and really just letting that verse sink deep as well.

[2 : 3 5] All right, chapter 3. Nearly the end of this wonderful book. Who's enjoyed Titus, the book of Titus? Hands up? Yep, it's pretty practical, hey? Yeah, and much shorter readings than Ezra, right?

Okay, let's be honest. But all of God's Word is wonderful, isn't it? Let me start by asking this question. How do you think of God? If I asked you the word God is, how would you fill the blank?

Maybe you might, would it be like, God is love? God is good? Maybe you might say. I don't know.

Maybe some of you might be bold enough to say, God is far away. Or, God is small, mean.

I wonder if the word kind comes to mind quickly for you. When it comes to thinking about God, is the first impression you get, kindness.

[3 : 40] Because if it doesn't, Titus chapter 3 tells us it should, right? Listen again to verse 4.

I hope you have your Bibles out, because I'm not telling you this out of me. This is from God's Word, right? Listen to verse 4. But when the kindness and love of God appeared, He saved us.

You see that? The kindness. God and kindness together. This is what the Bible calls good news, isn't it? This is an amazing announcement. There is a God who is over all things, and He is kind and loving and saving us from our sins.

I wonder if you still remember how Paul introduced this letter in the very first verse of the first chapter. He doesn't introduce himself or Titus, right? He says, firstly, he introduces God, right?

Paul, a servant of God, an apostle of Christ Jesus for the faith of God's elect. Always God-focused first. For the people of Crete who were reading this letter, infamously known as liars and brutes and lazy gluttons, how freeing must it have been to hear about this God, the kind God, a God in whom kindness and love have now appeared.

[5 : 03] And then look at our verses again, right? Verses 4 to 7. You want to zoom out a bit, right? Not just verses 4 and 5, even though we've been memorizing one of these verses. Because actually, in the original language, if you look at verses 4 through to 7 in your Bibles, you want to imagine all that as one sentence in the biblical Greek.

It just all runs together. One sentence, one profound sentence about our incredible God. This is an incredible saying. What's in the saying?

The saying says, to foolish, rebellious, deceived sinners like you and me, who were once trapped by our passions and pleasures, God's kindness has appeared.

In the love of God, our Savior, Jesus Christ has mercifully saved us. In the Holy Spirit, God has poured out on us grace, justified us.

What a powerful sentence, right? This is a sentence we need in a world of deep fakes and deep fears. This is a trustworthy saying. We need this sentence.

[6 : 18] I'm really just following on from what we've heard in the last two weeks here in chapter 3. Again, thank you, Isaac, for shaping and preaching this little mini-series. Actually, all the big ideas, the titles even, the outlines have come pretty much from Isaac's study and then just told me, right, Pastor William, this is chapter 3.

That's what it's all about. So, do check out if you are here for the first time. Do go onto our website and do listen into Titus 1 and 2. And you can always ask us any questions.

I do commend those talks to you. Those of you who have been tracking through Titus will of course know and hopefully has been clear to you that Paul has lots of practical instructions, right?

How to build healthy churches, chapter 1. How to have godly families, chapter 2, and so on. But I hope you've seen that they all spring out of what God and Paul describes as the truth.

The truth that leads to godly living, right? Verse 1 of chapter 1. The truth that leads to a people devoted to doing good. This phrase, doing good, appears several times in our chapter here, chapter 3.

[7 : 24] What is this truth? I've heard it described a few times, but essentially it's the same good news. Titus 1 verse 4 says it this way, There is grace and peace for sinners.

And it comes from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. Or listen to how Titus 2 verse 14 says it. This truth that brings salvation through our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself up for us to redeem us, to rescue us from all wickedness.

This is Christianity 101. This is the gospel we build our lives on. This is our foundational truth as God's people. And now in today's chapter, as we've just heard, again, we hear the gospel and this gospel becomes the center, the foundation that grounds us for doing good everywhere in our world.

Okay? So Titus 3 teaches us the same thing. The true saving news about Jesus is our foundation. And in Titus 3 we hear that it's our foundation for doing good in our world.

Whatever it looks like, whether you volunteer for charities, whether you just help your neighbor out, any good deed you do in our world, the foundation, Titus 3 says, should come out of the good news of Jesus.

[8 : 44] So let's look at this chapter in two parts. And then, like we did last time and the week before, I just want to share a couple of lessons from this passage for us today. Alright? So, two sections to Titus 3.

Firstly, let's look at our foundation. Again, let's go closely to verses 3 through to 7. So look at it in front of you. I'll read verse 3 again.

At one time, we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

Brothers and sisters, to see the glorious truth of verses 4 to 7 in its proper backdrop, we first need to hear verse 3, don't we? These are also truths of the gospel.

We heard about the Royal Commission on Abuse that was released this week. If there was a Royal Commission on your heart, on my heart, one that could search deep, it would say our relationship with God is not okay.

[9 : 54] It was not okay at all. And Paul knows this. He describes our former state. He uses two pairs of words, you can see that, right, to outline this. We were foolish and disobedient.

A foolish, Psalm 14 talks about how the fool says in his heart, there is no God. To ignore God and live as if he did not exist is foolish according to the Bible.

It affects our thinking about God and then it leads to behaviors that disobey him. We become disobedient as this passage says. But the verse goes on, right, verse 3, we become deceived and enslaved.

Here's another pair of words. Deceived and enslaved. Deceived, we become trapped in this collective godless culture that mocks God. We're deceived, right?

We'll watch something like, I don't know, the opening ceremony and think everything there is great. We even start to deny his loving kindness to us, his common grace and reject it, ignore that God is the giver of all these gifts.

[11 : 01] We're deceived and we're enslaved as well as God's people. We become bad, don't we? And one of the ways we become bad is we just become addicted or trapped in patterns of sin.

Sometimes not even able to discern what we're doing is wrong. We fall prey to these addictive behaviors that dishonor God and they just capture our hearts and minds that we cannot break free.

If you are a doubter of the fact that our hearts without God is totally depraved, think of the malice and envy you have felt about someone else even once at one point in your life.

Was there ever a time you really wished they were just gone? That's the state of your heart. Wishing bad things happened to people or that good things didn't happen to them.

I'm digging and digging. I take that some of you are feeling really defensive about what I've just said from verse 3. I get it. I feel defensive. I want to justify myself. I'm pretty good.

[12 : 06] I'm a pastor. I'm pretty good. I'm a nice dad, right? We do this because we live downstream from 21st century Western culture.

We live downstream from a world that says it's all about my self-image, my self-esteem. Life, we're told, is all about maxing out my pleasure.

That's our world, you see. We live in this pain-pleasure world. It's all about me and avoiding what's not good for me, I think. And yet for those of us who have lived that life, tried to, pretending to be wonderful when you're not, trying to please others, projecting an image that is not true, Jesus is wonderful news.

He is. Because in Him we don't have to deepfake our lives. We don't have to pretend. You can just say, Jesus, I am the worst sinner I know, but when your kindness and love appeared, you saved me.

He saved you. He saved us. In this singularly important sentence, actually this word, He saved us, is actually the only verb, it's the main verb, it holds everything together in this sentence.

[13 : 24] He saved us. Have you ever marveled at that fact? Again, we deceive ourselves sometimes. We think, I'm so good, of course He had to save me. Imagine if you were in God's shoes though.

Weighing up the cost-benefit analysis of whether to rescue or save that person or condemn them. Alright? Here's all the reasons we actually deserve hell.

Our foolishness, our disobedience, our deception, our envy, our hatred. And then here's all the reasons we deserve salvation. Wait, there are none. And yet, God scribbles His kindness all over our lives.

His goodness in our hearts. He saves us. What does the text say? Because of His mercy, not because of our goodness. Not because of any righteous acts I've done.

The Bible says to be saved means not to have any faith in our own self and our own goodness. No. To be saved is to place our trust in the God of mercy for our full acceptance.

[14 : 33] What does the text say? Once we too were foolish but when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared He saved us. Why? Because of His mercy.

What a wonderful sentence, right? What a wonderful explanation of the gospel of grace. Do you believe this? Do you want to believe this? I hope you do.

Every Christian's life old or young can be clearly mapped out I think in these verses right? In this single sentence our foundation. Keep looking verse 5 after the Father shows His kindness to us the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to realize that Jesus God the Son is our Savior and then we put our trust in Him.

Can you see that? That's our experience of salvation isn't it? Once we're justified we're declared right before God then by His grace we become part of God's family and we get the blessings all the blessings that Jesus deserves we get them too.

We could even imagine and actually believe and trust that Jesus is now our older brother through faith. An older brother who died and rose again to eternal life which means that we will rise again to eternal life in Him.

[15 : 53] We too in Him can become inheritors of the hope of eternal life verse 7. This is a wonderful description of our personal experience when the triune God rescues us.

You see that? And so we need to warn ourselves then if you and I find confidence about being a Christian or whatever in anything apart from this God who saves sinners if you think I'm a Christian because blah blah blah and it's not in this God I'm sorry to say you're a fool you're not understanding that what saves you is not you what saves you is the God of mercy who opens our eyes to see Christ as our Savior.

Our salvation begins with God's mercy God's kindness to us through the Father Son and Spirit. It's the good news and it's so important once we were sinners but in God's kindness Christ saved us.

What an amazing grace. Amen? What a foundational truth for us. Amen? And it's out of this foundation that then Paul goes on before and after this wonderful sentence to map out what it looks like to do good in our world.

So that's our second point. So we've talked about our foundation and now we're thinking about what does it look like for doing good in our world. Draw your eyes to the top of the chapter verses 1 and 2 where it says remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities to be obedient to be ready to do whatever is good to slander no one to be peaceable and considerate and to show true humility towards all people.

[17 : 46] Bring your attention to that last phrase to show true humility towards all people. In the original text all was actually emphasized twice. So literally we do like a real robot translation an AI version showing all gentleness to all peoples.

There's an emphasis on the all. So that's why this is a doing good for the whole world sort of chapter. The true foundation of the gospel helps us to raise good church leaders and strengthen churches.

It helps us to build godly families and now it helps us to do good to all people. All people. But you might be asking that's not possible to be good to everyone, right?

Come on. Let's be serious. We live in a hostile world. As Fran was talking about earlier people don't like it when we're Christians these days. Used to be one generation ago people thought ah, Christian is not for me you're just goody two shoes.

Now to be a Christian is to be hateful to some people, right? You're holding beliefs that deny someone the very identity and purpose. We are an outnumbered bunch.

[18 : 51] Is it possible to do good to all people these days? It's hard when you're outnumbered, right? According to the last census I count people in this country 2018 one in every two Kiwis today reject any religious affiliation.

We are officially a majority atheist or non-religious country. The fastest growing religion in New Zealand is not Christianity. The fastest growing belief system is belief systems like atheism and Islam, right?

If I was an alien from outer space and I studied even the maybe the rainbow movement I might even say that's a religion that's growing really fast in countries like ours.

It's got its own worldview its own key verses that they quote it's got its own festivals and months to be proud of even statements of faith secular creeds about sexuality and gender this is the world we live in.

It can be easy right? To be discouraged if you want to be someone who wants to do good to all as a Christian. Can we really do it? Well I don't know think of our Maori brothers and sisters some of you might not know the history but actually once upon a time here in New Zealand it was Maori who were taking the gospel to other Maori there was a revival actually they saw in the good news te rongapai freedom freedom from their endless fighting with each other and taking revenge on each other as tribes and yet in recent years again the stats show it the percentage of Christians among Maori in 2006 there was 46% who said they were Christian in 2018 it's dropped to 30% even lower right?

[20 : 35] Less than 1 in 3 now unlike Billy's generation and others Maori today in the kohangareo in the Maori immersion schools they are very very unlikely to have heard about Jesus in a good light very unlikely to hear about the kindness of God and the love of God our Saviour how do we do good to them?

it's a tough world we live in isn't it? when Christians are scorned and they're shamed and sidelined very tempting what's one option? tempting to just what? see you later right? we'll just hang out here this is our house we'll just have all our potlucks here and all our hangouts here and no Christian friends and yet Paul would remind us no because verse 3 again you were like that too don't forget you were like that too there was no excuse for holy huddles and being proud or superior you were like that too remember that Paul says and so verse 1 and 2 submit yourselves to the authorities around you obey them go and live there out in the world be people of peace not slandering people not mocking people that don't share your beliefs show true gentleness or humility to everyone you see the connection?

Paul is not calling here for just unreserved submission in all times and places to evil powers or people who mock Christians or whatever it's interesting Paul I think could write this way because when he wrote the book of Titus I think he wrote it around like the 40s and this was early on in the birth of Christianity as a movement and back then the Roman Empire that was ruling them they kind of ruled the empire quite well and Christians weren't being persecuted yet so maybe here Paul's just kind of saying look your authorities aren't too bad just submit to them certainly by the time you read a book like Revelation the author there in Revelation he's got to use coded language to say that Rome is like Babylon Rome is like a prostitute sitting on hills and look we might live in different times of history today we can meet here freely maybe in 10 years time and I'm not kidding you might you might be arrested for saying something wrong about Jesus or about someone else whatever choices we make have to reflect our time but as far as it's possible we are reminded here to be subject and obedient to our rulers and to do whatever is good okay

Paul's saying don't withdraw don't retreat don't pull back from this world that needs to know about Jesus to see Jesus so go out and live with the humility and gentleness that Jesus himself lived right did he withdraw from the world no right what did he do he came into our world he lived among us so we do the same we live with humility and gentleness because that's how Christ lived whether it's visiting refugees and the overlooked among us whether it's hanging out with people who don't think like you don't act like you people with health struggles people who are on different parts of the mental health spectrum whether you just are patient with your children when they don't always do what you want let the Lord who is gentle and lowly in heart be your guide to doing good and look let's say you do a good deed and it's not appreciated right

I don't know maybe when Adrian mows someone else's lawn one day and no one cares about it right or they don't say oh thanks right or they say you made it wrong when that happens to you like you can be discouraged sure or verse 3 you can remember what you once were you once were disobedient deceived right ungrateful that is the motivation isn't it the gospel again we were once like that too but God showed kindness so I'm gonna go do good even if people don't like it or I don't get appreciated for it it's so important right especially when you live in families that where your parents aren't Christian or your relatives aren't you're doing good all the time and you're no thanks for it Paul says in verse 8 we're gonna skip forward this is a trustworthy saying and I want you to stress these things so that those who are trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good can you see the logic stress these things i.e. the gospel and that will help you to do good in all of life there's no split between what we believe and what we do and how Paul teaches the better you know the gospel of grace for you the more readily you'll do good works out of that grace you see before we close our time in this book i want to end by just sharing three final lessons about what this might look like day to day practically okay so three final lessons for for doing good with the gospel as our foundation from again from titus but it's from titus to us first tip words can be wasteful so avoid foolish talk i mean look at verse nine again right avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law these are unprofitable and useless so this is actually basically the opposite of stressing the gospel right what's the opposite of stressing the gospel it's getting into foolish controversies stress the gospel avoid controversies because they are profit unprofitable and useless it seems easy to apply except we are very very rarely good at this i think i think far too often in church our conversations are precisely the opposite of this dynamic right i'll be honest right if i looked at my past 10 whatsapp conversations gosh what are we talking about here all right lots of controversy lots of debate over different things happening in people's lives and not much gospel is that you too even if i'm preaching the gospel up front what do you see in my conversations in the car ride home after church that's where we really see whether we are following paul's advice right words can be wasteful avoid foolish talk in my conversations in my dms in my newsfeeds so easy to put our energy into quarrels online that are unprofitable you've seen the ex kcd comic someone is wrong on the internet and he's just there all night trying to fix it come on let's not do that ask yourself too when you eat together with people what do you talk about what do you talk about in your groups is it the kindness of god that paul wants us to think about all the time or is it the latest argument at church the latest controversy the latest who said what and and when we choose which books to read which podcasts to listen to are we going to gravitate towards the one that stresses the gospel how to live it out or we're going to gravitate the one that just blabs about the latest gossip the latest contentious issue right some podcast that's how they get their likes right because they know

[28 : 32] they know you want to listen to this stuff stress the gospel and what you listen to and what we sing and and what we talk about when we meet look to drag each other into yet another gossip or grumble it's not loving it's the opposite of what paul stresses here imagine imagine a piece of easy english was known to be just a people who in groups and car rides wherever we're just talking about the love of the father all the time the grace of the son the renewal of the holy spirit in our lives far more than what the latest result at the qmm was or or what our cell group has been up to recently or who did what to who okay words can be wasteful avoid foolish talk secondly we see this in verses 10 to 11 division condemns so warn divisive people notice paul's movement and instruction he goes from stress the gospel avoid controversy but now warn a divisive person so this happens sometimes doesn't it in church and actually isaac i think touched on this in chapter one where paul said to rebuke these trouble wankers sharply right verse 13 and then here again we have a three-stage process and how to deal with a divisive person who's just in your church or your group and just promoting disunity all the time he says first warning second warning finally just have nothing to do with this guy people who pick arguments all the time who refuse to repent they've got a biblical description here right verse 11 warped and sinful these are people who have long ago forgotten how to stress the gospel rather they they they turn away from the kindness and mercy of god they condemn themselves because all the time they're just endlessly involved in arguments and fights but all that reveals is a heart that does not truly know god to be kind and gracious the problem's not with you it's with them of course we don't want people who never question leaders and authorities okay in church in anywhere that's how cults form right and high control groups they demand your obedience whether or not they're kind and loving or not but how do we encourage this kind of unity and submission to leaders right without encouraging you know going over the top abusive leadership again the answer is the gospel the truth about jesus needs to rule everything how we lead and how we listen and how we push back on things we disagree with if you have leaders in this church that deny that lovely sentence verse 47 that gospel of salvation you should and please confront them please confront them but don't make everything in church a hill to die on pcbc not everything is of first importance right there are lots of things that christians believe right what to eat what not to eat how the gifts of the spirit work today they're in the bible but they're not of first importance they're not in that salvation sentence so don't always assume that you need to fight it out don't always assume that you've got the better angle on this truth or that controversy some of you know that we on weekends like to visit different train stations and just make use of our public transport system anyone know what that thing is that's being pulled up and being replaced if this is a britomart station anyone engineer might know no it's called a buffer stop okay so it sits at the

very end of a train line okay so britomart used to be like a dead end right that's why they're doing the city rail link and so this buffer stop is like there as a backstop in case that train like forgets to put the brakes on okay there's a buffer stop okay so if it crashes at least it doesn't keep going like into like the wall and into queen street or something how many buffer stops do we have in our church i think we need more i think we need more buffer stops in our church so that there are fewer train wrecks i think in the life of our church family don't you think i wonder if you could be one of those buffer stops in the life of your church rather than a channel where train wrecks keep flying through if someone in your group wants to grumble or gossip bounce them back to the people they should be talking to if someone brings you a complaint or some kind of inside info about a brother or sister that really needs to be brought straight to them just buffer it back wouldn't that free us to stress the kindness of god more in christ and to live it out for the world to see imagine that sometimes i think about some of the long messages i've had to write okay to fight a ministry fire or to deal with a problem sometimes i've even wondered in some of our gatherings how much of this time spent discussing this thing could have been better spent on something more profitable like the kindness and love of our god to a non-christian like the kindness and love of god to someone who's suffering and struggling division condemns right so warn them be a buffer stop push it back finally last couple of verses paul ends the letter by instructing his readers the gospel is true so just be devoted keep being devoted to doing good and these final remarks of titus we get a wonderful glimpse right of how paul applies the gospel this stress the gospel to himself on the surface these might just look like random instructions you write in a letter so i'm going this way i'll see you soon blah blah blah send artemis or tychicus to crete and then titus come quickly right to nicopolis and join me here now by the way zenias and apollos they're coming in all right like make sure that they have somewhere to live and and you can make sure they have enough food to eat that sort of thing we need to look deeper this is paul living out the gospel wasn't he devoted to doing good and wanting others to do the same he is a man who's actually planted church after church after church in the mediterranean he could ask for anything and everything for himself and yet he lives out the kindness and mercy of god how by stressing the gospel he says to titus come quickly stress the gospel with me here in nicopolis i need help i need you i'm not a you know i'm not a lone ranger i need you here with me to help proclaim the gospel and then he says make sure apollos that famous preacher that everyone's trying to compare me against look after him can you see that's heart and paul there is no division there's no competition no gossip look after all those people who preach that aren't me please church look after these people when they're passing through this is a man devoted doing good again why because he knows the grace and kindness of jesus he and he wants us here to know this kindness and to live out this grace because actually in this very last line verse 15 very last sentence paul uses the word you in the plural okay so actually what it says grace be with you's all okay using the south auckland translation um this life of loving kindness is for

titus to listen to for church leaders for families and then for for you's y'all the entire christian community this is a letter for us right we need to stress the gospel we need to live it out we need to display its power in our lives how by learning to be devoted to doing what is good whether it's isaac or myself whether it's your other leaders here at pcbc we're certainly not the same caliber as paul here and how he lives out the gospel i think when jesus returns we'll probably be like back row i don't know if they arrange people in rows all right yeah yeah and paul's up the front and we're just polishing his crowns or something i don't know and yet because of god's kindness and mercy we're to heed his advice the gospel is true so be devoted to doing good in our world brothers and sisters until we see jesus again grace be with you all let's pray lord when we decided to follow jesus some of us did not know what it would cost us and yet we thank you lord we thank you that you keep reminding us week after week here elsewhere through your word that following jesus is costly but worth it because yes it is true we were once foolish and disobedient and yes it is true that your salvation has appeared to us through jesus holy spirit would you impress this book and the truths of it deep into our hearts so that we would be a people of god devoted to doing good in jesus name we pray amen