

Titus 3:1–8

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 November 2024

Preacher: Jeremy Meeks

[0 : 00] Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

For 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. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Good morning. My name is Jeremy Meeks, and I serve as one of the pastors at this church.

[1 : 31] I am oftentimes not in this church because I am often doing past stuff in other places.

But every once in a while, they unleash me on the pulpit here. And it is... And it is... Oh, no, that's right. No, that's not like to clap or whatever. You don't even know it's coming, so, you know.

It's a great joy to be here. And I got a confession to make, and that is the fact that I do not like most superhero movies.

Yeah, that's right. The goal of public speaking is you've got to lose the crowd before you win them. Why do I not like superhero movies? Most of them.

Simple. Because they're not true to life. Their superpowers are often crutches for lazy storytelling.

[2 : 33] But the reality is it's just not true to life. I mean, let's be honest.

I don't know who you are, where you're from, but you ever wonder if there's anything true? Like, if anybody knows what life is supposed to be like? Let me be honest.

A Christian life is not the life of a superhero. It's just true to life. That's my title for this morning, true to life.

We're talking in this series through Titus about a church worth joining. And a church worth joining has Christians who live true to life. The way it's supposed to be.

Like, if you're a Christian in here, just let me ask you a question. You can just sit on this all by yourself. How are you living? If you're not a Christian, you might be thinking, well, I mean, I don't know.

[3 : 34] Could life ever really be different? Is there actually a way to live? And could I ever live like that? Does anybody ever live like that?

What constitutes the Christian life? Well, we get a good rundown at the beginning of this passage. This passage starts right here. Who Christians are to be.

Verses 1 and 2. What is a Christian supposed to be? Well, thankfully, we have a lovely litany of seven things here at the beginning of the passage. Now, the challenge of this list is not its obscurity. The challenge of the list is its obviousness. Submissive to rulers, authorities, obedient, ready for every good work, speak evil of no one, avoid quarreling, be gentle, show perfect courtesy toward all people.

No, duh. I bet you already knew that before you walked in here. I mean, let's be honest. This is the kind of neighbor every human being at every place in the world through every part of time has always wanted.

[4 : 48] We've wanted a neighbor like this. Now, even if you're not that neighbor, you probably have good excuses, right? You got to shout in the right place. It's simply the way God made the world.

That admirable ways of being in the world are just admirable in and of themselves. I mean, if God makes the world and sets the rules, then you would assume that the way he wants his people to live is just the kind of no-duh way in the world, which is exactly what we have here.

Apparently, this is what Christians already know. It's right there in verse 1. Remind them. I mean, you know, if you came here last week, as a wise man once said, we had the wise behind all the what's.

Yeah, there we go. I mean, shoot, if you were even half paying attention to the scripture, you're like, I just heard this. And you did. Welcome to the burdensome joy of preaching.

Sometimes you got to say the same thing as the person said last week because the author just keeps saying the same thing. Apparently, if Paul thinks Titus needs to remind people of the same thing, then you need to be reminded and I need to be reminded of the same thing.

[6 : 11] It begins with this. There is a Christian way of living. Christians are to be these kinds of people. But even if you're not a Christian, just that kind of remember, it's like, shoot, that's what I heard growing up my whole life.

Because this is just what it means to be a good human. And it's always fun to consider these kinds of things in a post-election atmosphere. I mean, it comes just swinging out of the gate, doesn't it? You just read that first verse and go, oh, no.

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities as long as it's the one you voted for and you're really happy about. Not be grudgingly elected the worst of all possible options. Nope. This is just carte blanche.

All of them. Whenever. Wherever. It's just how Christians are to be. Yeah, but. No, there's no yeah, but's.

There's no asterisk. There's no PS. There's no footnotes. It's especially complicated in an already divided time and place. I mean, let's be honest.

[7 : 14] Are any of you, like, really happy? Are you? Of course not. You're sane human beings. Got a question.

You a unifier or are you a divider? Because according to this passage, it's not just that you're submissive to rulers and authorities and obedient, ready for every good work. Speak evil of no one. Avoid quarreling.

Be gentle. Show perfect courtesy towards all people. Be a person that brings people together. Now, if you're a divider, come back next week because God's got something for you and you're not going to like it.

I'll leave that one to Bing. Christians are just supposed to be the way we want every neighbor to be. Could it be that so many, maybe even you this morning, are turned off to Christianity?

Not because of what the gospel says, but because of what you look like? What I look like? Like, let's be honest. You can preach a message of reconciliation and not live in light of it.

[8 : 41] And your message sounds like the dumbest thing humanly imaginable. God, who made everything, created us in order to be these kinds of people.

And then worked in order that we would be these kinds of people. And we are not these kinds of people. You go, I'm not an expert in logic, but something just doesn't check out.

Friends, here's what you've got to know. You've got to live like a Christian. This is what Christians are supposed to be. I'm just reminding you of this.

You already knew this walking in the door. You've known this your whole life. Why is it so important to live this kind of life?

Well, here's one reason. It's in the next verse, verse 3. Having explained what Christians are to be, he then goes on to explain what Christians used to be. Just look at verse 3.

[9 : 43] For we ourselves, speaking of Christians, were once. In other words, Christians have a past life and a current life. There's a change in status. There's a who you used to be and who you are.

And don't forget who you used to be. Christians can sometimes get up on their high horse and go like, actually, verses 1 and 2, I'm doing a pretty decent job. That could be you this morning.

Congratulations. Keep it up.

You're just doing what you're supposed to do, by the way, so don't get, like, too happy. But don't ever forget who you used to be. Just as there was a litany of what we're supposed to be, there's a litany of what we used to be.

I wonder if you recognize yourself in the mirror. Foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

You recognize yourself? And if you do, like, let me just ask you an uncomfortable question. You miserable?

[10:53] You should be. I mean, let's be honest, everybody else is. Because if everybody wants the neighbor of verses 1 and 2, nobody wants the neighbor of verse 3.

Again, you don't even have to be a Christian to understand this. Who wants to be hated in hating others? I mean, we're surrounded by it.

What doesn't make sense is that those who would claim to be Christians live like this. Because guess what? You've had a change of status. This is just who you used to be. So if this is who you are, there's something fundamentally wrong.

Because you're not what you used to be. You were once like this. Christians, you can't live this way. It isn't who you are. But you were. It's not true to life. Non-Christians, I got some good news.

Because you don't have to live this way.

[11:57] This could be your past tense too. Maybe you're thinking, how could that ever possibly happen? I mean, sure, it sounds good. I am miserable. Anybody in their right minds would be miserable living in this kind of way.

Eaten up by passions. Torn apart. Tearing apart others. The neighbor nobody wants. But how could it be anything, be anything different? By the way, if you're a Christian, you're like, well, I mean, I unfortunately look into the mirror and see myself.

How could I not be this person? Is change really possible? Paul thinks there is.

Because he goes from what Christians are supposed to be to what Christians used to be. 10 verses 4 through 8, how Christians got to how they are. What changed?

It's the craziest thing in the whole world. Apparently, according to verse 4, the goodness and loving kindness of God appeared. Now, don't get it twisted.

[13:09] God's kindness and goodness has been there since the very beginning. It was there all the way along. If you have any familiarity with the Old Testament, here's what you know.

And if you don't have any familiarity with the Old Testament, which is just this big chunk up here in the Bible, let me survey it real quick. Ready? How are these people still breathing? Like every page is like, are you kidding me?

The goodness and loving kindness of God has been there since the very beginning. It's why you're breathing this morning.

But there's a particular way in which it appears according to this passage. Because it's the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior.

The one who created everything and called it good. The one who created everything and called it good. Who had humanity run in the wrong direction because they thought that they could be like God by disobeying him.

[14:19] Bad move. God's life. And yet God promising to fix the situation and taking a while to do it. I mean starting early but it was a long process. And yet it appeared in the form of a baby which is about to be what we celebrate in the next few months.

It appeared. It appeared. It appeared. It appeared for people who used to be a certain way. And he appeared in order to make them the way that we've always wanted neighbors to be.

I mean according to this he saves us not by works. Verse 5. But by the work of the Spirit in us. It's so like beyond comprehension that it's hard to even remotely wrap your mind around.

That God fixes the problem all by himself. Working in you to change you from what you were into what you are. Or from what you are right now to what you could be.

He does it coming on the heels. Verse 6. Of the work of Jesus on our behalf. As he dies in your place. Resurrects from the dead and says now the same life that I have is in you.

[15:41] Changing you from what you were to what you ought to be. Friends it's the best news humanly imaginable. All three members of the Trinity.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Working on your behalf to change you into the very person you always wished everybody else was your entire life.

That's the craziest thing in the world. And now all you got to do as a Christian is to live in light of the reality of what God has done.

Now let me be clear. There could be a possibility of going I think I'm a Christian but I don't know that kind of life. Let me clue you into something. You might not be a Christian. Because here's the thing. You don't like glow green once you become a Christian. How do you know you're a Christian? Because you used to live a certain way and now you don't.

[16:42] That's not what saves you. Don't get it wrong. He saved you not by works. But also don't get it wrong. You can't just keep living the same way you used to. That's not an option for Christians.

There's a past tense and a present tense. If you have any hope of your future tense being anything positive. I mean it's right here. Verse 7.

So that being justified by his grace. We might become the heirs according to the hope of eternal life. You got something coming friends. You got everything you've ever wanted.

It's like too good to be true. I wake up every morning just pinching myself going like is it really true? No you're not saved by good works.

But don't miss it. Verse 8. Saying it's trustworthy. 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.

[17:52] This is not optional Christianity. This isn't Christianity squared. This isn't like advanced Christianity. This is Christianity 101. And let me just tell you friend.

If you think you're a Christian. But don't have an experience in this life. That you might not be a Christian. And the best news is. That you're still breathing. Because there's still time to become a Christian.

To experience this transforming work of God having visited us in grace. To transform us from what we were into what we want to be. Is anybody perfect at this?

Absolutely not. The question is when you end up figuring out that you're verse 3 instead of verses 1 and 2. What do you do? Here's what a Christian does. They go back to verses 4 through 6 and go God I want to realize what you have done.

I want to live in the kind of way that you want me to live. It's as simple as that. Devote yourself to good works.

[18:53] And here's the beauty of it friends. Look what he says at the end of verse 8. These things are excellent. And profitable for people.

In other words. Living in the Christian kind of way in the world. Makes for a better world.

It's a simple. How can we affect society? Here's a preview of Sunday school next week. You should still show up because I'm the one teaching it. But here's a preview. Just live like a Christian.

How can we affect the halls of power? Live like a Christian. What can we do about public education? Live like a Christian. How can I change my workplace? Live like a Christian. What does it mean to be a Christian?

Be submissive to rulers and authorities. Oh I already know that though. Good. Live like it. Be true to life. Not just true to life life. But true to eternal life.

[19:59] Because that promised inheritance in heaven waiting for you. Secured by God's grace alone. It bleeds back into the present. Listen.

If you've got eternal life. Then who cares who sits on the White House lawn. Like seriously. I don't mean it doesn't matter. But it just doesn't matter that much. Question.

You actually think anything's waiting in heaven for you? You should. And believing that. And holding on to that. Then let that affect every day of your life.

A change of status. Demands a change of character. That's what this passage is arguing.

And if we live in this kind of way. Then it will be excellent. An excellent life. Profitable for people. Christian.

[21:13] Don't you want to live that way? Non-Christian. Don't you wish you could get in on this? It's not that hard.

Simply realize this. Verse 3 is my reality. Verses 1 and 2 is the way I wish I lived. And somehow. Just on the foothills of my understanding.

God our Savior. Showed up in loving kindness. In his son. To change me through his spirit. From.

What I am. To what I want to be. Friends live. True to life. Because a change in status.
Demands. A change in character. Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord it is a high calling.
[22 : 11] That you have called us to. I can imagine. For some. That it's. Feels like an overwhelming
burden. Remind us.

That this is the very thing. That you. Sent your son for. To work in us.
In spite of us. To make us the kinds of people. We've always wanted to be. Pray for those. Who are
not Christians.

Or who are not sure. That you would help them. Understand. The glory of what you have done.
In your loving kindness. And goodness. Through the work of your savior. Jesus Christ. That you
would make them.

[23 : 08] Transform them. Into the kinds of people. Who have an eternal inheritance. In order that
we all. Here this morning. Might live excellent lives.

That are profitable. To all people. Pray these things. In Jesus name.