

The Fruit of Christian Living And Its Gospel Roots

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[0:00] It's good to be with you guys here today and especially good to be with the kids that are here. I have a special favor to ask of the kids that are with us.

If you guys wouldn't mind, I would love if you would draw a picture of something that you hear or learn about today in our sermon. And then if you're able, I'd love it if you would show me afterwards. And if you can't happen to find me or grab me, show your mom or dad or your grandparents and I'm sure they would love to hear it and see it and talk to you about it. And the rest of us, you're welcome to draw pictures as well.

But let's turn to Titus 3, chapter 3, verses 1 through 11. And let me read God's word. 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 and be gentle and show perfect courtesy towards all people.

[1:04] For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our day 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 the renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured on us richly through Christ Jesus 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 good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.

But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law. For they are unprofitable and worthless. As for the person who stirs up division after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him.

[2:18] Knowing that such a person is warped and sinful, he is self-condemned. So it's been two weeks since we've been in Titus. And so before we dig into our text here, let me just take a quick moment to remind us of what we've been through so far.

Remember that the book of Titus is a letter from the Apostle Paul to Titus, who is on the island of Crete. Paul left Titus in Crete to finish the work of establishing the Cretan church.

In chapter 1, Paul instructs Titus about establishing the position of elders. He addresses the qualifications of elders, and then he specifically speaks about the role of elders in combating the false teachers and the false doctrine that was spreading among them.

Next week, Pastor Salvati will be preaching on Titus chapter 2. But just to give you a little quick overview in order to help orient ourselves to our text here today, Paul instructs Titus at the start of chapter 2 to teach what accords to sound doctrine.

Paul had just finished in chapter 1 describing the characteristics of what false doctrine produces. And now he's telling Titus to teach correct doctrine and describes what this looks like.

[3:35] What we'll see next week is that Paul first speaks about how Christians are to interact with other Christians. And specifically, he describes about how that looks within a believing household.

Now in our chapter, in chapter 3, Paul moves his instructions about teaching sound doctrine from an internal discussion to an external discussion.

In chapter 3, he speaks about how Christians are to interact with society. Paul gives some very concrete instructions about how we as believers are to interact in a non-believing world. Needless to say, instructions on how we as believers should live godly lives in the context of society is just as practical today and beneficial for us as it was for the first century Cretan church. But what I also want us to get from this text today is not only the instructions on how to live in society, but why we should conduct ourselves this way.

[4:40] What reason is there for us as Christians to interact with society in a particular way? What we'll see is that there's a cause and effect relationship that's going to happen here.

There's going to be a thing, and this thing is going to produce an effect in us. It's going to produce the effect that Christians should interact with unbelievers.

Another way to state this is that there's going to be a root, like the root of a tree. And this root is going to produce a certain kind of fruit.

What's interesting here, though, is the way that Paul teaches us this lesson. Instead of starting at the base of the tree and describing how the root produces the fruit, he starts with talking about the fruit first, and then he's going to trace back down to the root.

It's kind of opposite of how we normally would think. Then, to finish off our text, Paul's going to contrast sound doctrine with false doctrine. So we want to answer three questions here today.

[5:49] By the end of our time, I want us to be able to answer these. The first one, how should we interact with society? Concrete examples of how we should be. Number two, how are we able to accomplish these interactions with society?

And three, what's the difference between the false doctrine fruit and the sound doctrine fruit? So let's jump in. Point number one, the uniqueness of the Christian fruit displayed in society.

So let's look at what Paul has to say about how we are to interact with society. Look at verse one. Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient and to be ready for every good work.

The first thing that Paul gives us instruction on is our posture towards government. This would include local city governments, state governments, national governments.

Whenever you see that phrase ruler and authorities, think government. It's nothing like starting on an easy topic here, is it?

[7:02] Couldn't he have started with something a little bit easier like, remind them to say hi to strangers and smile to everybody? No, he starts with submission and government.

What's even more interesting is thinking about the historical context that he's giving these instructions in. The island of Crete and the Christians there, they're living under the forceful rule of the Roman Empire.

Rome controlled them. They were the government authorities. And by the way, they weren't elected officials. Rome had come in and invaded their land and ruled them by force.

Rome not only imposed their rules and authority on them, they often extracted a high tax on those they conquered to help fund their empire. Can you imagine what the Christians in Crete were thinking when Titus was instructing them to submit to the rulers and authorities?

The ones who were ruling them by force? What do you think their response was? Wait. You want us to do what? You want us to submit to their authority?

[8:18] Those guys. The ones that are oppressing us? It had to be quite shocking for them. Yet, here's Paul instructing Titus to remind the Christians to believe, to submit, and be obedient to the governmental authorities.

However, Paul's just not pulling this idea of submission out of the clouds. Submission and obedience is a theme that he's carrying over from chapter 2.

In chapter 2, we'll see how submission and obedience functions between believers, and specifically within a Christian household. And Paul's just carrying this same theme now over into how Christians should interact in society.

What we can start to see is that the fruit of the sound doctrine is characterized by godly submission and obedience. How do you think this would look if the Cretan church lived out this godly

submission and authority with the society around them?

Do you think they would just blend in? I don't think so. What about us? How does this present for us today?

[9:34] What would the fruit of submission and obedience look like for us when there's a politician or local government authority who's in power and we don't agree with them?

What do we do when there's a political party that's in charge and we don't agree with their stances? What would we say if somebody asked us, Why are you acting this way?

Well, maybe we say that we believe in Romans 13, where God establishes governments, and God is sovereign over the governments, and therefore our submission that Titus describes here, or Paul describes in Titus, is ultimately a submission to God's sovereignty.

Paul's instructions to Titus is to make sure that the believers are displaying a general posture of submitting to their authority.

Let's see what other instructions Paul has to say about our conduct with society. Verse 2. Speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and show perfect courtesy towards all people.

[10:55] I can just hear the Cretan Christians saying to Titus as he's instructing them, Okay, you know, you're kind of pushing the envelope a little bit here.

You know that whole thing about submitting to authorities and rulers? It was kind of tough, but okay, I can get on board. But now you're telling us to never speak poorly of anyone, avoid arguments with them, and be gentle with them all the time, and to top it off, you say show perfect courtesy towards all people.

Well, I'm pretty sure you don't know the people that I work with, or that neighbor that lives behind me, because if you did, you would know that this isn't possible.

How can I do this? Can we relate with this, church? Do any of the same thoughts ever pass through your head? Sure, that's a nice thought.

Be kind and courteous to everyone. But I'm not supposed to really do that, right? How can I do that all the time, and with everyone? Paul doesn't mince his words here.

[12:10] He doesn't say, don't speak evil most of the time. Or he doesn't say, generally don't speak evil to people. He says, speak evil to no one.

So what does that look for us, to speak evil to no one? What would it look like with that situation at work with my coworker, and everyone speaking behind their back?

Does speaking of evil apply in that situation, or to that person? What would it say if we didn't engage in that type of activities? Or what about the person on social media, who is always posting those things that make your eyes roll, or saying things that just make your blood boil?

They can't hear what I'm saying about them. So does speaking evil of no one apply in that situation? What about showing gentleness to your boss, who is constantly hard, mean, unkind, and abrasive to you?

Or the person who speaks to you disrespectfully in front of others, and is constantly making you feel bad? Do I need to show gentleness, and kindness, and avoid quarreling with them?

[13:26] Well, Paul doesn't use middle-of-the-road language here. He uses the words, no one, avoid, perfect, all people.

Remember, Paul's giving instructions on the fruit of sound doctrine, and it is uniquely different than the fruit of false doctrine. Can we ask ourselves, is our conduct as believers uniquely different than society's?

And notice, there's something very interesting here that's missing from these instructions. There is no indication that our actions towards others is dependent upon their actions towards us.

At no point does it say, those who show courtesy and respect and love to you, then you show courtesy and respect and love to them. No, the fruit that believers are to display is independent of their actions towards us.

So to answer question one, our first question here, how am I supposed to act in society? What we see with our passage in verses one and two, is that we should be characterized by submission, obedience, good speech, gentleness, peacemaking, and we are to do it to all people at all times.

[15:09] Anyone else feel the weight of those instructions? How am I supposed to even come close to doing that? How can I avoid gossip at work

or in conversations with friends?

How can I not be annoyed with those people in the stores that are always getting in my way? It's impossible to not argue with people.

It just happens. Well, recall the outline of our text. Paul first is giving us the fruit and then he's going to trace backwards to reveal the source of that fruit.

So if you're wondering, how can I produce this kind of fruit with others? The answer is found in the root. So let's look at point two.

The root produces the fruit sorry, the root that produces the fruit is the gospel. Let's look at verse three.

[16:17] For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our day in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

after Paul instructs us on the fruit, he takes a moment to remind us of who we once were. Just in case you forgot what you were like in the past, here, let me remind you.

Paul doesn't hold back. Listen to how he describes us. Foolish, disobedient, slaves to passions and pleasures, envious, hated by others and hating.

These are not very flattering things, and notice that they are complete opposites of what he described in verses one and two. He now calls us to obedience when we were once disobedient. He calls us to gentleness and courtesy when we were once hating and envious. He calls us to be peacemakers and considerate when we were once quarreling and malicious.

[17:38] Some of us might be asking ourselves right now, look, I know I'm not perfect, but come on, I'm not that bad. It seems a little bit of like a harsh description of me.

Well, we see in Jesus' sermon on the mount in Matthew 5 when he says, you have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery. But I say to everyone, but I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

What Jesus identifies here for us is that sin does not originate with the action. Sin originates in the heart. And this is the thread that Paul's pulling on here.

Maybe you didn't engage in the highest level of envy, hate, pursuing passions, and being envious of others. Maybe you could always find someone else who engaged in those things to a greater extent than you were.

But what of your heart? Jesus tells us that sin originates in the heart. Again, we see in Matthew 7, 21, Jesus says, from within, out of the heart of man, comes evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery.

[19:04] We hear this echoed in Jeremiah 17, 9. The heart is deceitful above all things, desperately sick. Who can understand it?

So when Paul describes in verse 3 what we once were, he is talking about the actions that we were once engaged in.

But let's not fool ourselves, Christians, into believing our hearts were not once pursuing the things of the flesh. Paul gives us a look at our natural heart, and it isn't very pretty.

But pay careful attention attention, pay careful attention to passages like this. When we read difficult things described about us and ourselves and our sinful human nature, and then you see the word but right after it, be prepared.

Listen closely because this is where the treasure is found. So let's look at verse 4. But when the goodness and loving kindness of our God and Savior, of God our Savior appeared, he saved us.

[20:17] 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 on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

in verses 1 and 2, Paul shows us the fruit that we should be displaying in society. He then reminds us of the way our hearts and lives used to be, and now we see that what moves us from what we once were to who we are called to be is the gospel.

Believer, there is only one way that can produce godly fruit that is described in verses 1 and 2 and that is by standing on the sound doctrine of the gospel.

What do I mean by the gospel? Where am I getting that from? You might be asking, I don't see the word gospel in verse 4. Well, let's look.

who appeared?

[21:36] What's this talking about? The person who appeared is Jesus. In John 1 14, we read, the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Philippians 2 6 tells us that Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself by taking on the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men.

the incarnation. This is when the goodness and loving kindness of God appeared. And notice what happened when he appeared.

He saved us. This is the gospel. God incarnate appears. He lives a sinless life, dies on the cross for our sins, and saves us.

That's the gospel. And we see the aspects of it here in verse four. The gospel is the root of the fruit that we're called to.

[22:54] We're asking ourselves the question, how can I produce this kind of fruit that I'm called to in verses one and two? The answer is by the root of the gospel.

And just in case we're a little confused about what that root is, let's look at verse five. Verse five says, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his mercy.

It's not only God's mercy to us that the gospel makes it possible for us to produce the fruit that is in accordance Godliness.

Do you remember that feeling that we were having as we were going through verses one and two? That feeling of impossibility? How are we supposed to do this?

How can I even begin to live in this manner that Paul's instructing us to? Remember the weight of that feeling? Do you know why we felt that weight?

[24:05] it's because that we know that if we were to rely on our own abilities, our own power to live this way, we'd never be able to do it.

I know that I don't have the strength and resolve to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be ready for every good work. I know that I don't have it in me of my own abilities to show perfect courtesy towards all people.

but thanks be to God that the root of my ability to do these things is not my own righteousness, but God's mercy to me through Jesus.

Isn't that a load off the shoulders? Isn't it good to know that the root that produces the fruit is not my own righteousness, but God's mercy?

I think of John Bunyan's book, Pilgrim's Progress. If you're not familiar with it, Christian's the main character, and he's traveling from his hometown of destruction to the celestial city, and as Christian is walking along the road, he's encountering various obstacles and trials along the way, but Christian's got a problem.

[25:29] He is constantly bogged down by this heavy burden on his back. The burden is described like a heavy backpack, and it's constantly weighing him down, almost pushing him down.

And a few times along the journey, this burden is so heavy and such a problem that it almost causes his death. But eventually something happens to that burden that Christian is carrying.

Let's read what John Bunyan writes. He says, Now I saw in my dream that the highway up which Christian was to go was fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall is called salvation.

Up this way, therefore, did burden Christian run, but not without great difficulty because of the load on his back. he ran thus till he came to a place somewhat ascending.

And that place stood a cross, a little below in the bottom, a sepulcher. So I saw in my dream that as Christian came up to the cross, his burden loosened from his shoulders and fell from his back.

[26:54] back. And it began to tumble, and so continued to do so until it came to the mouth of the sepulcher where it fell in and I saw it no more.

Just as the cross releases Christian from the burden on his back, the cross releases us from the burden to have our own righteousness be the root of our fruit.

Brothers and sisters, leave that burden at the cross. So we're trying to answer question two. How are we to accomplish the fruit that is called to in verses one and two?

The answer is by the root of the gospel. Moving on to point three. Cling to sound doctrine and pursue godliness.

Avoid false doctrine that proves worthless. starting in verse eight, Paul returns to giving specific instructions to Titus again.

[28:02] He says, I want you to insist on these things. Paul's kind of bringing his letter full circle here. Paul starts his letter by saying that the instructions he's going to give is to the benefit of the believer to improve their faith and their godliness.

Now he's wrapping it all up. He's saying, I want you to insist on those things that increase faith and godliness. And Paul gives one last contrast in verse nine.

He says, but avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

Can we see the difference between the fruit in verses one and two and in verses nine? False doctrine produces controversies and dissension, fighting, and it ultimately proves unprofitable and worthless.

This is very different than the trustworthy doctrine Paul insists on that produces obedience, gentleness, good speech, and is ultimately profitable.

[29:26] Sound doctrine unites. It does not divide. It is gentle and courteous, not quarrelsome. It speaks evil of no one.

Not creating controversies. And the difference between teaching false doctrine and sound doctrine is such a serious matter.

Look at what Paul has to say about those false teachers who are stirring up division. Verse 10. After warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him.

This is serious stuff. It highlights the importance of why Paul is instructing Titus to establish godly leadership in the church.

It's God's goodness to us. false doctrine and not speak to one that we see being taught by some in our society and has implications to our text.

[30:35] I'm speaking of the false teaching of the prosperity gospel. The prosperity gospel tells us that it is by our righteousness that God shows mercy and blessing to us.

The prosperity gospel says if you pray harder, if you give more money, if you clean yourself up spiritually, if you use the power of your own words to claim something, then God will show you mercy.

The prosperity gospel says if you don't have material things, it's because you need to increase your righteousness. Brothers and sisters, avoid such false teaching.

It is worthless and unprofitable. Instead, cling to the sound doctrine. Cling to the gospel that teaches us not by my righteousness, but by God's mercy that he's blessed us by solving our biggest problem.

the prosperity gospel tells us that we need to earn God's mercy and blessing. Sound doctrine tells us that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[31:58] Romans 5.8 This is the difference between godliness and worthlessness. Cling to sound doctrine. Avoid false doctrine.

sound doctrine. So our third question, we were trying to answer, what's the difference between false doctrine and sound doctrine?

Sound doctrine produces godliness. False doctrine produces worthlessness. goodness. So I hope that we can see as we walk through this text here some applications to our lives.

But I do want to point out just four quick application points that we can specifically draw out of the text here. Application number one, we need to be prepared to do good works, not just reacting to them.

twice in our passage, Paul mentions good works. He mentions good works that Christians should be engaged in.

[33:06] The first time is in verse one when Paul talks about submission to rulers and authorities. He says, be ready for good works. The second time is in verse eight when Paul is instructing Titus to insist on sound doctrine so that believers can devote themselves to good works.

Notice the mindset that Christians should have around these good works. Paul says, be ready and devote yourselves to them.

Being ready and devoting yourself to something means that you're preparing for it. You've put some thought and planning into it. You're anticipating it.

It's not just being ready but consistently and frequently pursuing it. There's intentionality here.

It's not just a reaction to the occasion. So how does this look for us? How does it look to be ready and devoted to good works? Maybe it would look like being ready and devoted to not speak evil and avoid quarreling with that family member that's never treated you very well.

[34:28] What if on the way to that family gathering you were praying for God's mercy and preaching the gospel to yourself so that you may display good fruit at this family gathering?

or maybe being prepared to do good works looks like you intentionally going to work looking with the goal of looking for a situation in which you can show perfect courtesy towards a coworker especially when they don't deserve it.

look for ways to show good works think about ways to show good works pray that God would open your eyes to these opportunities and then when we fail at it be devoted to do it again.

We as believers should be devoted and ready for good works not just reactionary to them.

application number two our good works should be performed with joy.

If we're truly grasping that the fruit of our good works is rooted in the gospel then our good works will be performed with joy.

[35:48] Paul says that we're devoting ourselves to good works here because these things are excellent and profitable for people. They're profitable not only for the person who's performing the good works but the one who's receiving them.

When we understand how God has shown us mercy how can we not joyfully show mercy to others? Mercy should produce joy.

So church when we submit to the leadership God has placed us under do we do it with joy because it's God's goodness to us? When I avoid quarreling with strangers maybe the guy who cuts me off in traffic do I do it joyfully because this good work is excellent and profitable?

Are we joyfully patient and gentle during our interactions with our children or spouse because it's in accordance with godliness? As believers our good works should be performed with joy.

Application number three the health of our Christian witness is dependent upon our grasp of the gospel. A proper grasp of the gospel is crucial for maintaining the health of a Christian witness.

[37:10] When we properly grasp the gospel it's like a car traveling safely down the middle of a road. when the fruit of our good works is not rooted in the gospel our car is going to slowly drift to one of the ditches on either side of the road.

We may drift and crash into the ditch of legalism. This would look like our works producing the bad fruit of pride. Look at me.

Look at all the good things that I'm doing while all those other people are doing nothing. the ditch of legalism can look like us becoming judgmental and thinking that our good works that we're performing are superior and more acceptable to God than the works of others.

It makes us believe that we're more spiritual and superior than others and ultimately we become like the Pharisees. Or without a grasp proper grasp of the gospel we can slowly drift to the other side of the road and crash into the ditch of laziness and inaction.

But there's no way around it. Paul gives us a clear call for believers to engage in good works. So with a proper understanding of the gospel is vital for the health of our Christian witness and it allows us to avoid crashing into either one of the ditches.

[38:41] application four. Don't let past sins prevent you from performing good works.

Many people are familiar with the song Amazing Grace. The song was written by a man named John Newton. John Newton lived in the 1800s and when he was a young man he was forced into the Royal Navy.

He hated his position so much that at one point he tried to run away from his post which is interesting because he was on a ship. He was caught shockingly, received a humiliating physical punishment and demoted in front of his peers.

He was transferred to another ship but was not able to get along with this new crew either. He so severely clashed with them that while they were docked in a port in Africa they left him there and just went home.

Newton was actually taken as a slave and treated miserably and frequently beaten. Eventually he was rescued but Newton had become angry, bitter, and hateful.

[40:05] He then went on to become the captain of a ship that was a part of the African slave trading system. But God would show mercy to John Newton calling him out of darkness and into light and saving him.

Newton would then spend the next several decades of his life pastoring a flock as well as becoming one of the loudest voices of his time fighting for the abolishment of slavery and the slave trade.

It was out of these experiences that Newton wrote the words amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

how easy would it have been for Newton when reading through our text today or hearing the Lord's call to him to do good works, how easy would it have been for him to say, Lord, surely I am not the appropriate person to be pastoring a flock of believers.

I'm definitely not the person who should be fighting against the abolishment of slavery. I'm the person who is characterized by foolishness, disobedience, quarreling, envy, hate.

[41:29] I'm the person who devalued fellow image bearers of God. Lord, with my past sins, how can I ever be expected to perform the good works that you're calling me to?

But thanks be to God that our text speaks to John Newton as well. Oh no, John Newton, the fruit of your good works that I call you to is not because of your works of righteousness, but because of my mercy.

Can we relate, church family? Has the thought run through your head, I can't perform good works, I'm not worthy, I would be a hypocrite, people would see right through me, but God says, oh no, the good works we perform in our neighborhoods, at our jobs, with our interactions with others at the store, while walking down the street, at any time, it is not because of works done by us in righteousness, but because of his mercy.

Don't let past sins stop us from doing good works, because they are rooted in his mercy, not our righteousness. Amen.

Pray with me. Father, thank you for your mercy to us. Thank you that it is not by our righteousness, but by your mercy that produces the fruit and gives us the ability to live in accordance with godliness.

[43:13] goodness. Lord, we want to be set apart for you in the way that we live our lives, in the way we interact with society. We ask for more grace from you to help us accomplish this.

In your name, amen.