

The Christian Life

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[0 : 00] What does it look like to live the Christian life? There are several answers given to this in the Bible, and depending on which passage in the Bible you look at, there's different emphases.

If you're looking at the writings of the Apostle John, the emphasis is on love. If you're looking at the letters written by Peter, the emphasis is on holiness.

If you're looking at some of the parables of Jesus, there's an emphasis on prayer. And there are other important answers to this question, but this morning, as we come to the third chapter of Paul's letter to Titus, he's going to paint us a picture of what it looks like to live the Christian life.

And his emphasis here is on how we live in society and on our interactions with all people. Let me read the passage for us this morning.

Titus chapter 3, verse 1 and 2. Paul writes to Titus, saying, Now, let's just back up for a moment and talk about how we got to this point in this letter.

[1 : 32] If we think back to last week, Paul just finished giving Titus a whole bunch of instructions for various groups of people in the church. There were instructions for older men, and then older women, and then younger women, and then younger men, and then some for those who were slaves.

And all of these things that Titus is to teach could be summed up in verse 12 of chapter 2. He was to teach them to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and devout lives.

And the reasons for this were two we talked about last Sunday. First of all, in verse 10, this kind of righteous and holy living adorns the gospel. It helps the world around us see the goodness and the beauty and the glory of Jesus.

It makes the teaching about Jesus attractive before the eyes of the world around us. And reason number two came to in verse 12.

We just said this, but this way of life is the way that God's grace teaches us to live. It's the kind of life that Jesus redeemed and purified us for.

[2 : 48] We talked about how we're not just saved from, but we're also saved to, saved for a new life. And so having said all this, Paul encourages Titus in verse 15 of chapter 2.

He says, These then are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you. So Titus, teach these things.

Encourage the people in the churches of Crete to live like this. And in some cases, you will need to rebuke. You will need to correct. But you have all authority to do so.

So Titus is being commanded by Christ through the Apostle Paul to teach the people in the churches to live in this way.

And let no one despise you, says Paul. Jesus knows that there will be people who do not like these words. People who look down with contempt on the messenger who brings and proclaims these words.

[3 : 52] But Titus, don't let that keep you from teaching these things. And with that word of encouragement, Paul now jumps right back into giving instructions to Titus about how he is to teach the people to live.

Let me read it one more time. Here in chapter 3, verses 1 and 2, he 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 always to be gentle toward everyone.

First, let's consider who these instructions are for. They are for the people. Remind the people, quite literally. Remind them. And then this list is given. So these instructions are for followers of Jesus.

They're not given to people outside the church. They're not given only to the elders in the church. They're not aimed only at the false teachers. These instructions are for all followers of Jesus. And if we look at the passage before this and the passage which follows, in both cases we see that he's been talking about us. He's been talking about those who have been redeemed.

[5 : 07] He has redeemed us from all wickedness. And if we look at the passage that follows in chapter 3, about verse 4 and 5, he's talking about us, how God saved us by his kindness and love.

And so we know that these instructions which come in the middle, yes, they are for them, the people in the churches in Crete, but they are also for us, for all of us who have been redeemed and saved by Jesus.

Next, let's take a moment to just notice the structure and the flow of these instructions. First, there's the main instruction given to Titus, and that's remind them.

So in some cases, they're already going to know these things, but tell them anyway. Remind them. Sometimes you might get tired of listening to me say the same things over and over again, but I have a biblical mandate to do that, to remind them.

Next, there's a series of infinitives given here. That's like to plus the verb. Remind them to be subject. Remind them to be obedient.

[6 : 11] Remind them to be ready. Remind them to slander no one. Remind them to be peaceable. Remind them to be considerate and to be gentle. And what this does is it links all of these instructions together.

The main thrust is for Titus to remind them, and each of these infinitives is the content. It's what he's to remind them of, what he's to remind them to do or to be.

And so remind them to be subject. Remind them to be obedient. Remind them to be ready. Remind them to slander no one.

Remind them to be peaceable. Remind them to be considerate. Remind them to be gentle. And finally, as we're looking at the structure and flow here, let's just notice that some of these things that he's to remind the people to do and to be, they are to do and to be those things to certain people. They are to be subject and obedient to rulers and authorities. They are to slander no one. And they are to be peaceable, considerate, and gentle toward everyone.

[7 : 24] And so we kind of see this movement in the passage here. First, it's how we should behave towards the rulers and authorities. That's government. Then in the middle, what we shouldn't do to anyone.

And then finally, towards the end, how we should treat everyone. Literally, all men toward all men. People inside the church and people outside the church.

So that's the structure and the flow here. And now we get to the content. And I had originally planned to cover these two verses in one sermon today. But I decided to split this up into two sermons because this first reminder here is a big one.

Remind them to be subject and obedient to rulers and authorities. I thought, you know what? This seems like it should really be a sermon of its own. And I don't want to rush it. And I also don't want to skip over everything after it.

So we're going to do that sermon about government next Sunday. And everything else that's here we'll be looking at this morning.

[8 : 25] So let's start with the very end of verse 1 here. He says, Remind the people to be ready to do whatever is good. Remind the people to be ready to do whatever is good.

Quite literally. To be for every good work prepared. Notice the similarity to what Paul said just a moment ago back up in verse 14.

There he told them that Jesus Christ gave himself for us to redeem us. To purify for himself a people that are his very own who are eager to do what is good.

And if we go with a little bit more literal. A people that are his very own zealous for good works. And so now again down in verse 1 of chapter 3.

He says, Remind the people to be ready for every good work. So Christ Jesus wants us to be zealous for good works. He wants us to be desiring to do them.

[9 : 26] To be ready for them. Now there's three things that we can talk about here. I'm going to give you three words. Mindset. Benefit.

And action. First, let's notice the mindset. We are to be ready for every good work. Now this doesn't mean that we have to have thought of every possible good work that we can do in advance.

That's impossible. What it does mean is that our general approach, our general attitude as we go through life. Is that when the opportunity to do good comes. I'm going to say yes.

If I can. I'm going to be willing to do it. And I know when we talk about good work. Sometimes we only think of spontaneous acts of kindness.

Maybe like helping the little old lady across the street. But good works includes much more than this. We can also think about the good works that we're already doing on a monthly or a weekly or a daily basis.

[10:32] Are we presenting ourselves to each day with a readiness to do these things. These good things that we've been given to do by God.

To fulfill our responsibilities. To keep our commitments. Or are we just kind of fumbling through day after day. Unprepared and reluctant to do the things that we know are coming.

The things that we know we're responsible for. And so mindset. We start with the mindset of readiness. The mindset of willingness. But then as I was thinking about this.

You know a ready mindset really does translate into some core. I'm going to call them core readiness habits. Some things that we regularly do that support those good works.

That we do daily, weekly and even monthly. I'm talking about things like exercise. Good sleep and rest. Maybe it's reading and staying informed for good decisions that you might need to make.

[11:37] On a particular issue where you regularly have. It's part of your work. All of this is the stuff of being ready. It starts with our mindset. But then it flows from there into some good core readiness habits.

And depending on the kind of work you do in your week typically or your day. That's going to look a little different for you maybe. Than it is for me. Now let's talk about this second word.

About the kind of works that we're to do. We are to be ready to do good works. What makes a work good? I would suggest that it's primarily those things that bring benefit to someone else.

Something that meets a need. Or shows love to someone. Or brings a blessing or an encouragement to others. Maybe it's a service that's offered.

And again, our tendency is to think of those spontaneous acts of kindness first. Like helping your neighbor get their snow cleared after a big snow. But let's also think of the things that we do every day.

[12:44] The things that we do every week and every month that bring benefit to other people. Your job, if you have one, is something that brings benefit to other people.

It is an opportunity to do good work. There are a few kinds of work, obviously, which are not good. Inherently immoral.

Like prostitution or predatory lending. I'm not talking about those kinds of things. But the vast majority of jobs offer some service. Offer some benefit to other people.

There's an inherent goodness to work. And so, let's just think about the ways that we here in our church bring benefit to others in our community. Through our jobs.

I'm not going to mention any names. But from those represented in our church that came to my mind at least this week. Our neighborhoods and our highways are kept safe. Food is produced for people to eat.

[13:45] Machinery is fixed. New babies are looked after and medical advice is given. Plants are grown so that we can have fruit and flowers. Meat is produced and prepared and delivered.

The administrative needs of the local school are met. Children are taught and counseled. Food is prepared for hungry guests.

Railroad tracks are repaired. The administrative needs of rural municipality are met. The elderly are cared for. Children are looked after.

And there's more, I know. But through all of these services, we offer benefit. We bring benefit. We do good for other people. And through all of these services, we also bring home an income which puts food on the table for our families and provides needs for our families, whether it be shelter, clothing, or many other good things.

That's just the stuff that we're paid to do. On top of that, we could talk about all the stuff that we're not paid to do. Serving on boards. Committees. Community volunteer stuff.

[14:56] Serving in the church. You get the idea. We were made to do good works. Things that bring benefit to others. And that, it does include the spontaneous acts of kindness, but it also includes the stuff that we do every day.

In our jobs. In our families. At home. In our neighborhoods. In our church. And good works in all these areas of life have one thing in common. It's about bringing benefit to others.

We try to emphasize this with our kids at home often. Because we get the question sometimes.

Dad, why can't I listen to another episode of Adventures in Odyssey?

And the answer sometimes is, well, because you've already listened to a fair amount of that today. And life isn't just about entertaining ourselves. It's about bringing benefit and blessing to the world around us.

To people around us. Sometimes I ask my kids this question at the breakfast table first thing in the morning. Before they've had a chance to even think of what the day is going to hold. How are you going to bring benefit and blessing to someone today?

[16:04] Because we want to start our day not by asking, what are the pleasures that I can get for myself today? What entertainment. But instead, what can I do for the benefit of someone else today?

That's why God has us here on this earth. Ephesians chapter 2 verse 10 says, That's the purpose of life.

One of them. And especially of our new lives in Christ. It's to do good works. Things that bring benefit. Things that bring blessing to others' lives. This is also a great question to ask yourself at the end of each day.

As you lay down to fall asleep. You can reflect back on the day and just ask, How did I bring benefit and blessing to others today? Did I spend my day well for you, Lord?

And so mindset, ready. Ready for what? To bring benefit. And to bring benefit, how?

[17:16] With action. Good works. The word works implies action. It implies effort required.

These ways of bringing benefit to people, they're not just automatic. They require us to do something for others. They require us to get up off the couch and go do it. Whether it's helping with the dishes or taking out the garbage if it's stuff at home.

Or to go out of the house. Get in the car. Drive somewhere. To do it. We've got to turn off the screen. And we've got to get out. We've got to get busy.

Good works are about action for the benefit of others. So this is that first thing that he says. Remind the people to be ready for every good work.

It's a mindset about bringing benefit to others through our action. Next he says. Remind the people to slander no one.

[18:15] And we did talk a little bit about this last Sunday. That was one of the things that he talked about for the older women. Not to be slanderers. Here the same idea is repeated again.

But with just a little bit of a different nuance. He uses a different word in the original language. And the word used here is perhaps a little broader in meaning. Here it's not just spreading falsehood about other people that we're to avoid.

It's more generally speaking in a disrespectful way. To others or about others. In a way that demeans others. That makes them look bad.

Or dishonors them. Paul says. Remind the people to do that. To no one. And the emphasis is quite strongly placed here. On the no one.

Not a single person. I find myself convicted. Especially when it comes to the realm of politics. Boy is it easy to use words.

[19:16] To demean. To dishonor those in government. Who are advocating policies and ideas maybe. That we disagree with. Another place that could be tempting to do this.

Is with our children at home. Sometimes we parents can get impatient. We could use our words to demean. To shame.

To disrespect our children. But this is not the way that we're to live. We are to slander. We are to insult. We are to speak disrespectfully.

To no one. Here's a bit of a conversation starter for the dinner table. Later today. How can we speak about those who are doing evil things.

Honestly. And at the same time respectfully. In a way that doesn't dehumanize them. Or demean them. Or insult them. I'd be curious to hear what you guys.

[20:17] Come up with. Certainly a challenging thing. From there he says. Remind the people to be peaceable. Remind the people to be peaceable.

The opposite of this is warlike. Combative. Argumentative. Do you know someone who. Maybe just always wants to argue. Where the conversation feels like a battle.

And you're always trying to defend yourself. Maybe they're trying to bend you into submission. To their view. Or thoughts. Or ideas. Or maybe do you come away from conversations. Routinely reflecting on.

Whether you won or lost. If so. Maybe. This is you. Maybe this is something you struggle with. We're not to be like that as Christians.

He says. Remind the people to be peaceable. That is. People who are calm. Friendly. Willing to listen.

[21 : 16] Willing to come to agreement. Even if it means that we don't always get our way. Or see eye to eye on everything. Jesus loves peace.

He is the prince of peace. And yes he said some hard things. Yes there were some fiery moments. That he even he had. And moments of righteous anger.

But on the whole. He was peace loving. He was gentle. Our God is slow. To anger. He's compassionate.

He's a God who forgives. Wickedness. He's a God who hates. Violence. He's not quick to just hammer people. For the love of it.

Like some people in our world are today. So he says remind the people to be peaceable. Our family was reflecting. A little bit on this at home this week. Using one of Solomon's proverbs.

[22 : 17] I'll be honest. Yes we have. Moments in our own family too. Where. The tension rises sometimes in the house. And we. Are getting frustrated with one another.

And we. Opened up the word and came to this. Solomon. King Solomon said. Better a dry crust. With peace. And quiet. Than a house full of feasting.

With strife. And so remind the people. To be peaceable. Let's be peaceable. He goes on. Remind the people to be.

Considerate. The original word used here. Has to do with. Not insisting on every. Right. Of the letter of the law. Or of custom. It means to be courteous.

Yielding. Tolerant. We live in a fallen world. And none of us is perfect. Not a single one of us is righteous.

[23 : 17] By our own merit. Just as we've let people down. And made mistakes. And said things that we shouldn't have. To people. And people have put up with us. So we should do the same for others.

When they let us down. Or make mistakes. Or say hurtful words. We're to be gracious. To one another. I think that's probably. Even a better way to translate this.

We're to be gracious to one another. Forbearing. With one another. And yes. It is difficult at times. But. Let's remember. We are people. Who through Christ.

Have been forgiven. So much. And so we need to show. That same grace. To others. As the normal rule. Of how we relate to others.

Did someone bump into your vehicle. In the parking lot. Give it a little scratch. Don't fly off the handle. And call the police. And threaten to sue their pants off.

[24 : 15] Did the waitress at the restaurant. Accidentally mess up your order. Be gentle. Be reasonable. Who knows. What kind of day she's having. Maybe it was just an honest mistake.

Maybe the cook misread the order. Don't just let them have it. And call the manager. And insist on having your meal for free. Remind the people to be considerate.

Or gracious. And last on the list here. In this verse. Remind the people always. To be gentle. Toward everyone.

The King James Version. Translate this. Translates this quite literally. As showing all humility. To all men. And they're capturing a part.

That's maybe missing in the NIV there. All humility to all men. The word that's used here. Means not being overly concerned. With yourself. Or having an inflated view.

[25 : 12] Of your own importance. In my opinion. Gentleness. You know. It just doesn't quite hit that. At least not anymore. When I think of gentleness. I think of.

Not being rough. Not being violent. But there was a time. When gentleness. Also meant to be humble. And to be considerate of others. And we.

Kind of. Have a remnant of that. In the word. Gentleman. A person who thinks. Not only of himself. But also the people around him. The person who holds the door open.

For others. And so. Be totally. Be fully. In every way. Considerate. Toward all people. Thinking of them.

And not just yourself. And these three things. To be considerate. To be gracious. To be peaceable. This is how we're to be.

[26 : 08] Toward. Everyone. Toward. All people. All men. In other words. No discrimination.

Is allowed. Again. I find this convicting. I sometimes feel like. I have the right. Maybe. To be nasty. To a person. Because they were nasty. To me. Or I have the right. To be. Mean. To someone. To say. Something about them. Because maybe. They're militantly.

Promoting things. That. I think. Are harmful. To others. Or are. Immoral. Let's be clear though. He's not telling them. To compromise. What they believe. He's telling us.

That there's a certain. Kind of normal. Christian. Kindness. And humility. And love. That we're to show. To every human being. In our actions. And in our words.

[27 : 05] Jesus said it. This way. In the sermon. On the mount. Matthew chapter 5. He said. You've heard. That it was said. Love your neighbor. And hate your enemy. But I tell you.

Love your enemies. And pray for those. Who persecute you. That you may be children. Of your father in heaven. He causes his son. To rise on the evil.

And the good. And sends rain. On the righteous. And the unrighteous. Jesus goes on. He says. If you love those. Who love you. What reward.

Will you get? Are not even the tax collectors. Doing that. And if you greet. Only your own people. What are you doing. More than others.

Do not even the pagans. Do that. The point here. With all these things. With being peaceable. Being gracious.

[28 : 00] Being considerate. To all men. Is that we're not. To go around. And treat people. According to what kind of. Treatment. We feel. They deserve. And you know. This is huge.

This is what Jesus. Was known for. The Pharisees. Went after him. For the kindness. And the love. That he showed. To the outcast. To the prostitutes. To the sinners.

May we not be a church. That's only kind to the kind. Loving to the loving. May we be like Jesus. Who is peaceable. And gracious.

And considerate. To all people. Jew or Gentile. Slave. Or freeman. Rich. Or poor. He didn't show. Favoritism. To people. And so this is the picture. That Paul paints for us. Of what it looks like. To live the Christian life. We're to be. Ready to do.

[28 : 57] Whatever is good. It's a mindset. To bring benefit. Through action. We are to slander. No one. In other words.

We're to watch. Our words carefully. And we're to be. Peaceable. Gracious. And considerate. Towards all people. With no favoritism. And I want to bring us back.

One more time. To the reasons. Because we really have to do this. For the right reasons. There are lots of good reasons. Given in other passages. That he could have said here. He could have said. Living this way.

Honors God. Brings glory to God. Pleases God. He could have said. Living this way. Living this way. Is really in your own best interests. Because if you treat other people good.

They're going to treat you good. Those things are true. But these are the reasons. That he gives here. In this letter. We are to live this way. To adorn.

[29 : 52] The gospel. Look back up to verse 5. Why? So that no one will malign. The word of God. We are to live this way.

Verse 8. So that those who oppose you. May be ashamed. Because they have nothing bad. To say about us. We are to live this way. Verse 10. So that in every way. We will make the teaching. About God. Our savior. Attractive. We are to live this way. To adorn. The gospel. To make that message. Look good.

As it really is. Is your life. Saying to others around you. Jesus is good. Jesus makes all the difference.

Second. We are to live this way. Because it's the life. That we have been saved to. As we. Mentioned at the beginning. We saw this up in verse. Verse 12. Chapter 2. This is the way.

[30 : 47] God's saving grace. Teaches us to live. And verse 14. Jesus gave his life for us. To redeem us. And purify us. To be a people.

Who live. Like this. Eager. To do what is good. This is God's will for us. This is his plan. For us. As his special people.

It's a life. That we're now. Given to live. And this life. Is a gift of grace. This new life. To live. Was given. At great cost. To our Lord Jesus.

He suffered. And he died. To redeem us. From the old way of life. And bring us. Into this new way. And so. As we heard. From the words of Jesus. Last Sunday. I just want to leave us.

With these words again. Jesus said. You are the light of the world. Let your light. Shine. Before others. That they may see.

[31 : 44] Your good deeds. And glorify your father. In heaven. Let's pray. Father.

We thank you. For these words. Of encouragement. And. Sometimes. As we hear these things. They may feel heavy to us. I know that Lord. That's how I felt.

Earlier this week. But I thank you. That. You don't just leave us. The way that we. Were. Before we met you. Before we knew you.

Thank you. That you give us. Your Holy Spirit. Who enables us. To live this. And. Puts those desires. For this. In our heart. Father. and so I pray Lord that in this week ahead today and in this coming week that you would just fill us with that desire for this kind of a life towards others keep bringing that conviction where we need it Lord keep working change in us we don't want to be the same as we have been in the past we want to do this we want to make your gospel look the way it really is sweet, wonderful, powerful to the people in this community so work in us we pray in Jesus name Amen