

Why Do Good in God's World

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[0 : 00] Gracious Father, we do thank you so much for your deep love towards us. And having so loved us, we pray that you would help us to love others. Help us to see these truths from your word afresh this evening as we look at Titus chapter 3 together.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, please turn again to Titus chapter 3 if you're not already there, page 1201. There's also an outline in the pew sheet.

I think there's some more up the back if you wanted to grab one. I don't know who comes to mind when you think of a good Christian. Maybe this person on the first slide, the Pope, maybe.

Or perhaps better, this next person. Old Chewbacca. Or maybe even, I don't know, this person actually. Did you realise that the Simpsons just turned 30 years old last month?

And when the creators of the Simpsons wanted to include a Christian character in it, yes, they made him very cheesy, but they actually made him good. He's always been, well, a couple of episodes I've seen anyway.

[1 : 10] He's always been good to his neighbour, Homer, who is never good back to him. But it's hard being a good Christian in our world, especially when we have neighbours like Homer, isn't it?

Or especially today when our society has moved further away from God. In fact, a couple of months ago, last November, the ABC released an article online which referred to a survey done in July, just last year.

It's on the next slide. Where 70% of those surveyed, I think it was over 54,000 people, 70% of them say there is now religious discrimination in Australia today, whether they are churchgoers or not.

So this is not just church or religious people saying this, this is non-religious people saying this.

70% of Australians think there is religious discrimination in our society today. And so given this growing discrimination against us, the temptation might be to withdraw from the world, become a little bit like the Amish, that group in America who relate to the world very little.

Or to, on the other hand, conform to the world, which sadly some of our churches have done today. These two temptations, withdrawing or conforming, they would have been the same two temptations for the Christians on Crete back in Titus' day.

[2 : 31] And remember, that's where Titus is. He's on the island of Crete. We saw that a couple of weeks ago when Paul writes this letter to him. And you might remember from chapter 1, verse 12, that Cretans were liars, evil brutes and lazy gluttons.

It was not a good place. But in today's chapter, we're encouraged not to withdraw or to conform, but to engage with the world by doing good.

Let me just show you the big idea. So you've got your Bibles there, verse 1, the end of verse 1, it says, to be ready to do whatever is good. We'll have a look at the middle of verse 8, on the right-hand side of the page there.

He says, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. And right at the end of the chapter in verse 14, our people must learn, verse 14, our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good.

You get the idea? We saw this actually in chapter 2 last week, didn't we? But last week, it was about doing good as various groups of God's people, older, younger, men, women, that sort of thing.

[3 : 43] And it was both inside the church and outside the church. But this week, it's about all Christians doing good, and particularly outside the church in God's world.

And so how are we to do good? Well, firstly, by submitting to authority. So we're at point 1 in your outlines, verse 1 in your Bibles. Paul says to Titus, remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, and to be obedient and to be ready to do whatever is good.

And so here we see we're to submit to the authorities, the laws of the land. And immediately we think, well, what if? What if the government says something like, you can't be a Christian, or you can't tell others about Jesus and so on?

We always go to those hard case examples because we don't really want to do the plain case examples. But, well, of course, we're to obey God rather than men. In fact, on the next slide in Acts chapter 5, that's what Peter says.

But there are plenty of occasions, and we're not at this point really in Australia yet, there are plenty of occasions where we can and should obey the authorities. We ought to be good citizens.

[4 : 56] And so we're to submit to the speed limits, the copyright laws with music and videos, paying our taxes, even to the council regulations.

A guy from our church was building a house, he's just finished it now, building a house up in Warrandyte. He submitted the plans and got initial approval, but then the council came back and said, there's a one metre square patch of plants that are native to this area of Warrandyte.

You have to change your house plans and build a slightly different place. I mean, this is the council, right? Now, I offered to disappear the flowers overnight for him, but he changed his whole house plans.

That's submitting to the authorities. Now, of course, it doesn't mean we can't protest or petition. He did petition the council, but lost. And we can petition about religious freedoms and the like.

There's nothing wrong with pursuing legal channels. But in the end, the point is we're to do good in God's world by firstly submitting to the authorities.

[6 : 09] And we're to do good by slandering no one, but showing gentleness to everyone. And so it says, the rest of verse one, be ready to do whatever is good, like, verse two, slandering no one, but being peaceable and considerate and always gentle toward everyone.

We're to be ready to do whatever is good, like these things, like not slandering. To slander is to speak evil of someone, tell lies about them, to malign or defame their name.

The tabloids do it all the time, but it's easy for us to do it too, to join in. I mean, just take the latest news about Meghan and Harry. You can't escape it, really, can you?

It's everywhere this past week. And yet we don't know the full story. Yes, their actions may appear to be selfish and immature, but we can't then call them spoilt brats because that would be to slander them.

We don't know the full story. Instead, we are to be peaceable and gentle. And given it's talking about slandering, I take it particularly in the way we speak to others, being gentle.

[7 : 21] The word peaceable literally means not to be a brawler, a fighter. We're not to pick a fight with our words, deliberately push people's buttons.

We're really good at doing that with our family, aren't we? But instead, to be gentle to everyone, even when they say things to us without thinking. People do that all the time, don't they?

I still remember a guy who moved away from our church because he moved location out to the country. And I think it was about a year and a half, two years later, he came back. And you know the first thing he said to me?

Gee, Andrew, you've put on weight. Now, I know I need to do some exercise. But you know what the first thing I was tempted to say back? Look who's talking! I didn't.

Because that would be pick a fight. Rather, our words are to be gentle, even if their words aren't. But again, this is not always easy to do, so why bother trying?

[8 : 21] Or why not just withdraw from the world so we don't even have to deal with them? Or why not conform to the world so that we can give it back to them? Why do good instead?

Well, because of the gospel. Point to verse 3. The NIV is missing a very important word at the beginning of verse 3. It's the word because. So verse 1 and 2, we're to do good because, verse 3, 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 or goodness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us.

Not because the righteous things we had done, just like he saved Israel, not because they were the most numerous nation, 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, made right with God 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.

[9 : 35] Why? So that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.

This saying and these things are meant to drive us to do good. And so what is this saying? Well, I take it it's the gospel message that he just unpacked in verses 3 to 7.

And stressing these things refers to these aspects of the gospel message that drive us to do good. So what are these things?

Well, three, firstly, what we once were. Second, God's amazing love. And third, who we are now. I mean, just look at verse 3.

Look at who we once were. We were just like the world, when you read it. And this has two implications. First, we cannot use their bad behaviour as an excuse not to do good to them.

[10 : 41] We can't say they don't deserve it, because neither did we. For we were once just like them. And yet God showed us great goodness by saving us.

And so if your neighbour throws rubbish over your fence, you don't throw it back over their fence or refuse to do good to them, like bringing their bins in for them. In fact, bringing their bins in might help them to stop throwing rubbish.

But the reason we're to do good is because we were once like them. And God still did good to us. The second implication here is that if God saved us when we were just like them, then he can save them too. Can't he?

And so I wonder whether Paul is still having in the back of his mind what we saw last week about doing good to make the gospel attractive. You're on the next slide.

[11 : 41] We saw from Titus 2, verse 10, and a couple other verses actually, about doing good to make the gospel attractive. One of the sayings I heard when I first started out in ministry, in which I tell, I think, every student minister and staff member at least once, is this.

People don't care what you know until they know that you care. Let me say that again. People don't care what you know until they know that you care.

And so we are to do good to show that we care, that they in turn may care what we know, that is, Jesus.

Might ask about him, hear about him, and be saved. For we were once like them, yet God saved us. And so he can save them too. But the second of these sayings that is meant to drive us to do good is that God loved us. Look at verse 4 again.

[12 : 51] Given what we are in verse 3, but when the kindness or goodness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.

Just like last week, where God's grace appeared in Christ, so this week, God's love also appeared, and we're meant to take it, appeared in Christ.

I mean, it's just like that famous verse, John 3, 16. Do you remember that one? For God so loved the world that he gave his only son.

That's right, Philip. Thank you. Yeah. God's love appeared in God's son, who died for us. And when you look and remember what we were like in verse 3, I mean, just look at verse 3 again.

That kind of person is not easy to love, is it? You know, disobedient, deceiving, hurtful, hateful, and yet, God did love us when we were like that.

[14 : 00] That's amazing love, isn't it? Not just that he loves us when we were like that, but then would give his son to die for us when we were like that.

I have an only son whom I love very much, although sometimes I wouldn't like to get rid of him. No, I'm only joking. I'm only joking. But I would never give him up even for good people, let alone people like we were in verse 3.

It's hard to imagine. I mean, think of someone you love in your family, not someone who you happily give up. Can you imagine losing them for your enemy?

God's love is truly amazing. And if we reflect on how God so loved us, then it ought to drive us out of gratitude to so love others.

I remember a guy from my old church, he had to pick up something from a shop for his wife. It was a spotlight store, which he said was already an act of love because he prefers Bunnings stores.

[15:11] But he was in one of those underground car parks and he was walking to the shop. He was in a bit of a rush, but he noticed a lady who was struggling to change her tyre. She had a flat tyre in the car park.

And so he stopped to help and changed it for her. And apparently the lady said to him, that's so kind of you to help. To which he responded, well, God's been kind to me in Jesus.

Now, the mention of Jesus kind of killed the conversation at that point. But the point of the story is he showed love and kindness to others out of gratitude for God's kindness and love to him, you see. This is how God's love drives us to do good. But God's love has also given us a new identity which ought to also drive us to do good.

And look at who we are now in the rest of verses five to seven. He saved us through the washing of rebirth. We've been reborn, we have a new identity, and renewal by the Holy Spirit whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

[16:19] So that having been justified or made right with God by his grace, we might become heirs. This is also who we are, having the hope of eternal life.

You see, verse five, we've been given new birth into God's family. We have a new identity. Where verse seven, we've been made heirs of eternal life.

An heir is a member of the family who inherits from the parents. This is who we are. This is our new identity and we are to live like it.

I skipped past this idea but we saw it last week in chapter two, verse 14, which I think I've got on the next slide where it talks about, we can look at your Bible, where it talks about Jesus Christ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself.

There's the idea of washing and renewal. Purify us. That he might have a people who are his very own, part of his family.

[17:21] There's our identity again. To do what? Well, eager to do what is good. In fact, we see it elsewhere in the Bible, like on the next slide, Ephesians chapter two, verse 10, we are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

You see, we have been given new birth, purified, washed, renewed, recreate, whatever expression you want to use, we have a new identity as members of God's family, which means we are to reflect our father's likeness and do good.

On the next slide is a child who reflects their father's likeness. Of course, God never sleeps, so we can't reflect God's likeness like this, but you get the point, don't you?

We are God's family, so we are to reflect our father's likeness, to be like the true son, Jesus, who perfectly reflected his father's likeness by being godly, doing good.

And what's more, if we are heirs of eternal life, we can skip that thing, Sandra, if we are heirs of eternal life, then we will inherit an eternity of good, the new creation.

[18:39] And that frees us to do good now, doesn't it? I mean, imagine if you're going to inherit a billion dollars, knowing what's to come, wouldn't that kind of free you to be generous with what you have now?

It would, wouldn't it? We are heirs of eternal life and the new creation, so you should free us to do good now, knowing the great good we're about to receive.

In fact, knowing that our eternity of goodness is a great gift ought to also move us to do good out of gratitude, wouldn't it? You see, these are the things, verse 8, that Titus is to stress and we are to remember.

So that, verse 8, we might be careful to do what is good. Actually, verse 8 doesn't say that exactly. It says, be careful to devote ourselves to doing what is good.

Be committed to it. Make time for it. Or as verse 1 said, be always ready to do it. But sometimes, we're not always in the mood, are we?

[19:52] Imagine for a moment, my wife asked me to help her with something and I said, I'm not really in the mood to help, go and do it yourself. I'd end up on the couch. Actually, Michelle's very gracious, but the point is, being devoted to her means I will help her whether I'm in the mood to or not.

We're to be devoted to doing good, whether in the mood for it or not. Committed to it. Now, this is not always easy at the best of times, but it's even harder when we have little time.

And so, we're to remember, we're actually not in this alone. For God's Spirit who gave us new birth in verse 5, it's the same Spirit in verse 6 who has been poured out on us generously.

So, we have help. God's Spirit works through our conscience to prompt us to do good, to make time for it if we listen to Him prompting.

I live in a cul-de-sac just over here and one of my neighbours, a lovely lady, but she likes to keep the street quite clean. She's often out there with her blower. It's her toy, but she's blowing the leaves around and sort of sweeping up and the like.

[21 : 06] And I was walking home up the street, up Keyword Street towards my place and I noticed that there was a KFC box on the road and I knew my neighbour wouldn't like that and I thought I should pick that up.

That was God's Spirit prompting me to do good. Now, I realise some rubbish is dangerous, but this is just a cardboard box and yet, you know, my first thought, do I have to?

I'm really not in the mood and I have to get back and finish a sermon. I've got other important things to do. Surely, God. Have you ever found yourself doing that? You know, arguing with your conscience or really the Spirit prompting you?

Perhaps trying to justify not doing the good thing you should do? In the end, I remember thinking, alright, and I picked it up and took it home and put it in our bin.

But the point is, we're not alone in doing this. We have God's help. If it wasn't for God's Spirit, I would have just walked straight past it. But we need to listen to his prompting.

[22 : 09] For doing good, verse 8, is excellent and profitable for everyone. On the flip side, what is unprofitable, verse 9, are arguments and foolish controversies and endless genealogies.

And so we're to avoid those to do good, along with divisive people and being unproductive. Which brings us to point 3 in verses 9 to 15, but I think we're getting out of time, so let me finish instead. Our world is sadly moving further away from God. Religious discrimination is alive and well, and yet we're not to withdraw into a holy huddle out of the world, nor are we to conform to the world, as some people do.

No, rather, we're to engage with the world by doing good. And we're to remember that we're not alone in this. We have God's Spirit to help us. And when it's hard, remember the Gospel.

Remember those things that Titus is to stress, and we are to remember. Remember that we were once just like the world, God's love to us. And yet God did great good to us.

[23 : 28] Remember God's amazing love to us, that we might so love others. And remember who we are now. Heirs, members of his family, who are to reflect our Father's likeness.

Reflect on these things, that you might be motivated to keep doing good. In fact, as our next song says, love so amazing, so divine, it demands my life, my soul, my all.

Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank you for this reminder to do good in your world.

not just to please you, although that ought to be enough, but also to make your Gospel attractive to others, all because of your goodness to us in the Lord Jesus.

Our Father, we pray that you'd help us when things are hard or it's hard to do good to others who hurt us. We pray that you'd help us to remember your amazing love to us when we were just like them.

[24 : 47] Help us to remember this, that we may continue to love and do good just as you have loved and done good to us in Christ. We ask it in his name. Amen.