

Devoted By Grace

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Date: 30 April 2023

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[0 : 00] Simple, straightforward here at the end, in the conclusion of Paul's letter here to Titus and to the churches on Crete. And I want to tell you that I have grown to really enjoy reading through these concluding remarks in some of these New Testament letters.

I actually find them to be quite helpful. If you're like me and you enjoy after watching a movie or a documentary or something like that, or if you're a sports fan, perhaps you like watching the behind-the-scenes features that come up different times on movies or events and things like that. You kind of get to peer behind what they want you to see to see the reality of what is true behind the scenes. I enjoy things like that. And these conclusions in these letters help us to do that somewhat.

The body of each letter, including Titus, is really packed with theological significance and with practical instruction. But it's often in the closing comments of an epistle that when the author is particularly concerned with personal notes and travel arrangements and things like that, giving names of people that are around him, it's in those moments that we really begin to glean from the example of these faithful Christians.

We can really be edified if we were to just slow down at this point in these letters to consider who these people are and what they were doing, and we can actually experience a great amount of encouragement there.

[1 : 31] There's a sense in which these letters allow us, these portions of the letters allow us to kind of peer behind the instruction. It's almost as if you go to a Bible conference with your favorite preachers.

Perhaps you sit in the audience and you hear all of the preaching and the instruction that comes through, and then perhaps you have a backstage pass to where after hearing the instruction of these men, you step behind the scenes and you get to witness their interaction with the other people on their team or with other Christians in their way.

And you begin to see the true nature of their passion. Is there a reality in their character and of their personality to what they have just demonstrated or displayed on the platform or as they have preached?

It would be an interesting thing to see. And as we come to these letters, that's what we begin to see. And that is such the case here at the end of Titus. With the exception of verse 14, there's no direct instruction to the church here.

These are just personal notes. And for the most part, what we learn from these verses comes through observing the example of the people that are involved.

[2 : 43] Their gospel conviction, their love for Christ, their passion for serving the church are all revealed in how they live their lives. And that's what we actually find coming to the surface here.

How they actually live their lives, at least in just a small taste of it. Which should prompt us to a particular kind of self-evaluation. We might ask ourselves, does the way that I live my life generally communicate love for Christ?

That is grounded in the transforming work of the gospel of grace. That's what we find to be true of these men. That's what we find to be true of their testimony.

We might ask a question like this, to whom or to what am I most devoted? Because when we come to this text and we ask that same question of these men, of Artemis and Tychicus and Titus and Zenos and Apollos and Paul, and we could go on and on through Paul's various lists, and we were to ask that question, to whom or to what are these men devoted, as far as we can tell in the scriptures where they're mentioned.

And we would have no other conclusion than to say they are wholly devoted to God and his work, to the lordship of Christ, to the spread of the gospel. And then we ask ourselves the same question.

[4 : 06] If we were to be included in a letter that someone was writing, what would be made clear about the way that we live, that shows to whom or to what it is that we are most devoted?

Would it actually indicate to people clearly that the thing we're devoted most to is the glory of God, to the work of the gospel, to the lordship of Christ?

Were there other things that seem to distract us along the way? Through our observation of this particular text, I think we can discover at least three distinct ways that these men were devoted to God.

And all of them, as we get to the very last phrase, are ultimately rooted in the gospel of grace. So let me give you the three devotions that they have. Number one, we see devotion to the work of God. Devotion to the work of God. Verse 12, Now the fact that this is a personal letter from Paul isn't lost on us here, is it?

[5 : 18] It's very simple. He's giving some just administrative notes here, his traveling plans, some administrative adjustments to the positioning of some of the team members on his ministry team.

And what I love about this is it begins to give us a real sense of the early ministry dynamic of the early church. And all the moving pieces that were at work here.

All of these moving pieces that are geared toward establishing new churches, in taking the gospel of grace to places where it has not yet gone. But then at the same time, endeavoring to strengthen the churches that have been established.

And what a monumental task this is. Here is Paul particularly. The other apostles would have certainly been involved with this as well. But here we see Paul in particular with such a vast concern for the work of God that he's got this team of men and he's sending some of them to Egypt, it would appear like in this particular text.

And he's wanting Titus to come back because he needs to send him to Dalmatia, we would find at the end of 2 Timothy. And now he's trying to determine, do I send Tychicus or Artemis to Ephesus, or do I send one of them to Crete, or what do I do?

[6 : 30] And we see all these moving pieces, all with one particular goal. That the work of God would succeed and that it would flourish. That the gospel would go forth. And that the churches that have been established wouldn't suffer in the meantime.

That they would continue to grow in grace. Reveals an incredible commitment to gospel ministry.

That's really what we see here. An incredible commitment to gospel ministry.

It's almost like a strategic plan for war. As Paul no doubt alluded to in a few different occasions, that this life is very much like a war. It's like a spiritual war.

We are good soldiers, he tells Timothy, that are fighting for the cause of Christ. And here he is as a general and an apostle. And he is putting the plan together.

And he's sending the people in the grace of God. Paul, we find, will soon send either Artemis or Tychicus to take Titus' place. And then Titus was to make it a priority to rendezvous with Paul in Nicopolis.

[7 : 33] Now, if we look at some of the other letters, if you care about this kind of side information, as we look at the other letters, we find that it would have been ultimately Artemis that goes to Crete, because Tychicus ends up in Ephesus to take Timothy's place.

Once Titus ends up in Nicopolis to meet up with Paul, Paul sends him on to Dalmatia, where we find at the end of 2 Timothy as well. So you can kind of see the picture of it there and how they're all moving around.

Now, here's something I want you to know. Note, though Titus had a very specific task in Crete, he was never meant to stay there indefinitely.

That was never the point. Nor was he ever instructed by Paul to see that his specific task was brought to completion before relinquishing his responsibility to someone else, perhaps Artemis at this case.

Do you see that unfolding here? He's never meant to be there permanently. He was on a temporary assignment with a specific task, but he is not instructed in this letter at any point to bring the task to completion before relinquishing his responsibility to someone else, which tells us a couple of things.

[8 : 51] Number one, it tells us that this letter indeed was not meant, though it was personal, it was not meant to be a private letter. The instructions here were not only for Titus. The instructions here

were for the church and all of the structures that Paul's talking about, all the theology here, all of the practical things.

It's not just for Titus to kind of store away in his own mind. This was meant for the church to continue on in whether Titus was there or not. That's important for us to understand.

The next thing that I think is so significant for us to observe here is to see that these men were devoted to the work of the ministry, not their particular role in it at any given moment.

Do you understand what I mean? Clearly, what they're concerned about is the overall work of God, no matter what that meant for them, in whatever way that meant for them to be best used or in whatever place it meant for them to be most useful to the Lord.

What they cared about is the big picture. What they cared about was the work of the ministry, not their particular role that they had become, perhaps fascinated with or territorial over.

[10:05] Their flexibility, it shows that their concern was not to build their own kingdom. It wasn't to gain their own following. They were building the kingdom of God as God gave them grace to do so.

And this is an attitude that is absolutely necessary for each of us to possess. The fact is that the work of the ministry, gospel ministry and the work of the church is never truly brought to completion until the Lord Jesus returns.

This task that Titus has been given is not one that ever ends. The task that we have been given is not one that ever ends. And the ministry that's outlined here would continue long after Titus was dead and gone.

And it will continue for Lakeside Bible Church long after Jared is dead and gone. And long after you are dead and gone. And Lord willing, the Lord raises up other people, perhaps even our children, to take the same task that's outlined for us in the scriptures and to move forward out of a concern for God's work.

What a mess these churches would have been in had Titus decided that he was indispensable to them. Had he refused to step aside and make way for Artemis or Tychicus to come in and to carry on the work there.

[11:22] Whenever our devotion is to the work itself, we will happily and humbly serve in whatever way is most useful to the work of the church.

Do you see that? Now I know this room well enough to know that you've been around churches a long time. And you know what it's like to be involved with people who will not serve the Lord unless they do it on their terms and they do it in their way.

They're not concerned about the work of the church so much as they're concerned about what they want to do and how they want to be involved and all the things that are most concerning to them.

And we find a wonderful example just in the fact of how flexible these men were in moving around and doing the things that were best for them to do at any given moment. Something that we should all take into account of our own lives.

That's not to deny gifting or that there are particular ways that the Lord uses us best in the church. Of course, we need to understand that. But the attitude here is of humble, happy service no matter what that means.

[12:29] Which brings us to the point of usefulness. What does it actually mean to be useful? Who is actually useful and suited for the work of God? Because when we come to this text, we find that clearly all of these men had committed their entire lives vocationally to gospel ministry.

They had perhaps given up their own work or jobs. We would imagine that they are probably single men at this point that were foregoing the blessings of marriage and of a family in order to dedicate their lives solely and entirely to the work of God.

We find that. We don't find that very often these days. But we do find that to be true in the New Testament on a number of occasions. But does that mean that this kind of devotion that we find as an example here is only applicable to people like that?

Like to the people that just decide, you know what? I want to give my whole life to vocational ministry even if it means that I'm not ever going to be married or anything like that. I'm just going to go to the mission field or I'm going to do the thing or I'm going to give up all the other things that I care about in order to do this.

Does that mean that this particular type of example is only applicable to those types of people? And we would have to say, of course not. God may or he may not call you into some kind of vocational ministry or as a missionary to serve around the world or as a church planter to go to another part of

even the United States.

[13 : 58] But devotion to what he is doing in and through the church belongs to every person who is part of his church. Do you see that? The example here is not about being Titus and traveling the globe to have a specific type of ministry to specific types of churches.

The goal in the example here is just to be devoted to the work in whatever way that means for you where God has put you and where he has placed you in your life. Neither is it true that usefulness is based on a particular set of skills or personality.

And we find that because there's at least half of the men mentioned here that we don't know anything about. Two of them we know well. We know Apollos well. We know he was a skilled speaker.

We know that he needed to be trained by Aquila and Priscilla to understand the gospel better. But we also know that there was a faction of people in Corinth that wanted to follow him instead of following Paul.

So that clearly he was a gifted speaker and he had a personality that was attractive to certain people. We know that. We can find Tychicus in a number of places in the New Testament always serving faithfully alongside the Apostle Paul.

[15 : 14] Artemis and Zenos we know nothing about. We have no clue who they are. And I think if not for anything else it's just a hint of the fact that you don't have to be somebody to do something and to be useful to the work.

You just have to care about it. If you love the Lord and you desire to serve him he will use you. Therefore be devoted to his work.

Give yourself to it. Give yourself to the work of the ministry as these men did. Well then we have to ask what does it actually look like to be devoted to God's work?

We see that that was the devotion here. We see what they were willing to do. Their care and their concern for the work even over themselves. We find that okay maybe we can glean from this that I don't have to be anybody particularly special to be useful but how can I actually be useful?

In a practical sense. And we get a little glimpse of it here in verse 13. Look at it with me again. He tells Titus specifically do your best to speed Zenos the lawyer and Apollos on their way.

[16 : 22] See that they lack nothing. Zenos and Apollos probably were the carriers of this letter. If we trust church tradition and ancient church tradition Apollos ended up in Egypt and spent quite a bit of time ministering there.

Perhaps that's his assignment here. That Apollos and Zenos are on their way and they're stopping on behalf of Paul in Crete in order to deliver this correspondence to Titus so that he knows what to do and so the ministry is flourishing.

They didn't have text messaging and emails then. They had to hand carry letters at that particular point. And so they stop in in Crete before they head on to their other place and then Titus is given this instruction. Do your best here.

It translates the word for diligence meaning that Titus was to diligently speed the men along on their journey. And how was he to do that? By seeing to it that they had everything that they needed.

by making sure that they were refreshed in the Lord. To make sure they had a place to stay. That they had some meals for a few days to strengthen them. That all of their resources were replenished to get them the rest of the way to help them.

[17 : 31] Titus' job here was to coordinate the efforts to meet these basic needs. An early example of what it means to love and serve missionaries. This is as clear as I think it gets in the New Testament for us.

There's such a wonderful picture of it as we see and some of us have had these conversations before. It's always kind of heartbreaking when you find missionaries who come and they load up the station wagon so to speak and they gotta travel the globe for three or four years just to try to get to where they're going.

And I think part of the problem with that is that we don't necessarily have the mindset that Paul is trying to pass on to Titus here where he says when they come refresh them make sure they have everything diligently do what you can intentionally go after coordinating all the efforts that you can to actually help these men get where God is sending them for the good of the gospel.

They're devoted to the work you're devoted to the work let's work together to get them there and to get the gospel where the gospel needs to go. What a wonderful picture that is here.

Maybe it's God's desire just for you to be a coordinator a facilitator of these types of things just meeting the basic needs of others for the good of the ministry.

[18 : 49] Our devotion to the work of God is directly linked to our diligence in assisting whatever work is being done. That's really the point. Just be diligent to see what's happening and get involved.

Get involved. It's opening your home and hospitality so that others can grow in the Lord and in fellowship. You may not be a teacher but you can offer your home to gather people around so that someone else can do the teaching work and the discipling work.

Devotion is regularly giving so that ministry can flourish not only in our church but in ministries around the world. Devotion is volunteering to help with a fellowship or an outreach event or a Sunday ministry opportunity.

Devotion to the work of God is caring enough about the ministry of the gospel to actively look for ways to engage with it. And that's the point that I want to get across to you as we apply this to our own church and to our own lives.

Do you have a concern for the work? It's to have what God is doing in the world and around the world at the forefront of your mind and desiring to be a part of that work in whatever way God has made available to you to be a part of it.

[20 : 11] Do you care about the work? Like the big picture work? Like just the fact that God has us here for the purpose of his own glory and for the expansion of his kingdom and for the sharing of his gospel.

Do you ever think about that? Is it ever at the forefront of your mind? When you sit down and you make your budget every month and you begin to think about what we're going to give or what can we give?

Is there ever a thought that begins with there is this dynamic of God's work and we need to be committed to that? That's our devotion. We need to be committed to that.

Or is it an afterthought that you get to if you can? What about when it comes time to actually help someone or be beneficial in some way to a program or to a ministry? Is it that we're going to devote ourselves to this thing because we're Christians and that's what we care to do?

We care about the work. Or is it if I can get to it I'll get to it and that will be great and if I can't no big deal. This is an attitude shift here. Don't lose sight of the purpose for your salvation.

[21 : 19] Don't lose sight of the purpose for why God has planted you in the place that he's planted you. For why God has planted this church in the place that he has planted it. For why God has given us whatever resources he's given us and he's given us the people that he's given us.

To be devoted to the work. We find that clearly here. They're devoted to the work. Secondly, they're devoted to the glory of God. They're devoted to the glory of God. Verse 14.

Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works so as to help cases of urgent need and not be unfruitful. people. Now this verse contains the most explicit instruction that we find in this final passage and it's right in line with what Paul has been emphasizing over and over again in this letter.

Namely, that Christians are to manifest their faith in visible and practical ways. I can't remember exactly how we worded the theme at the very beginning.

You can go back and listen to those if you care to know it specifically. But generally it is this, that our faith moves our behavior and it produces certain conduct and a huge part of that conduct is this dynamic of good works.

[22 : 31] That Paul is concerned that Christians, Jesus is concerned that Christians manifest their faith in visible ways. Our character is to reflect godliness and we are to intentionally concern ourselves with doing good for others.

Over and over this is mentioned in the letter. But we have to ask ourselves, what is the ultimate goal of these good works? Why are we doing them? Are they an end in themselves or are they a means to a greater end?

And the answer is undoubtedly the latter. They are a means to a greater end. The purpose of our godliness and good works God's is the glory of God.

It's the glory of God. It is to make him and his gospel known in the world. This is what we talked about briefly in our member meeting last Sunday night.

Remember we looked at Adam in creation. God puts Adam and he makes Adam in his own image in order that Adam would be God's representative on earth.

[23 : 38] And that image is marred because of sin but God doesn't do away with the human race altogether. What do we find him doing next? He chooses Abraham and then he builds up a people, a nation in the seat of Abraham and he calls them and delivers them out of bondage in Egypt.

Why? So that he might have his glory made known on earth through the people of Israel. And then what do we see him doing in the New Testament? Same thing. Ekklesia, church, called out ones. He calls them out from the world in order that he may be known in and to the world. That's the purpose of the church. That's the purpose of why God has saved us and why he has put us here. It is for his glory, that is to make him known. And Paul tells us clearly in this letter, part of how we glorify God and make him known is through our godly character and our efforts in goodness at good works.

according to chapter 2, this is the visible effect of the gospel. Just look at chapter 2 and verse 14 again. Jesus gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness, to purify for himself a people for his own possession, called out ones we belong to him.

[24 : 57] Why? That we might be zealous for good works. That's the purpose. Are you fulfilling? fulfilling your purpose.

Last Sunday night we looked at 1 Peter chapter 2. You are a chosen people, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession.

Why? That you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. What does that mean? It means to glorify him, to make him known, to be his representatives on earth.

And the point of this verse is abundantly clear when you begin to break it down into parts. That we glorify God ultimately through our works, our goodness, our righteousness.

Let me break it down just in three quick things for you not to get too nerdy about it, but I think it may be helpful. There is an action that is followed by a manner in which that action is to be carried out, and then there is a purpose statement for the action.

[26 : 08] So for those of you that have heard me talk about arcing, some of us were talking about it this morning, if you want to go home and you want to arc this text, those are your three propositions. There is an action, there is a manner, and then there is a purpose, an action, and a purpose here.

The action is that we are to devote ourselves to good works. Look at it in the verse, verse 14. Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works.

It's very clear, isn't it? That's the action that we are to take. We are to learn. That means we are to grow by doing these things. There is an action. Learn to devote ourselves to good works. The manner in which we are to carry out that action is in the next phrase, by helping cases of urgent need.

So pause a specific vision here for this, that we do these good works by helping cases of urgent need. And then the third statement is the purpose statement. So that we would not be unfruitful. So that we might be fruitful, not useless in making God known, but useful. In other words, the path to glorifying God in this verse is to intentionally concern yourself with the good of others.

[27 : 24] The path to making God known in your life is to intentionally devote yourself to meeting people's needs. And Titus was to be the example here.

What he was going to do in coordinating these efforts for Zenos and Apollos was to be an example to the people. That as they watched him, who was already there temporarily, who was already there having to mooch off of others, so to speak, right?

He's not meant to be there. That means he's having to be there at the benefit of someone else's hospitality. And yet, despite that, he still is the one who is responsible for coordinating all the things so that Zenos and Apollos can get on on their way and can be fruitful in their work as well.

And that was to be an example to the people. So that as they looked at Titus, they would see, no matter what's going on in my life, no matter what, I need to be looking for intentional ways that I can meet the needs of other people, because it is by meeting the needs of other people, that I make God known to them, because that's what God does.

He is a good God, and he's a loving God, and he's a gracious God, and he gives, and he gives, and he gives, and he gives, and there is perhaps no greater way that we display the character of God in

our lives than when we take on this perspective of his goodness and of his graciousness to others. [28 : 49] We glorify him in this. We make him known in this. The lookout for number one mentality of our world, sadly, has invaded the church in many cases, and it does seem that fewer and fewer people are concerned for this kind of good work.

The problem is we're so often more concerned with meeting our own needs than we are at helping someone else, and perhaps the problem is that we've lost sight of Christ's purpose in redemption. That is to make us a people who are zealous for good works. We're zealous about a lot of things, there's no doubt about it. I'm not always sure that fruitfulness in meeting needs is one of them, but if we devote ourselves to the glory of God, making him known in the world, works of mercy will be the inevitable result.

it must be, because this is the work that God does in us, and when we concern ourselves to this end, this is what would happen.

And so we ask ourselves, first, are we devoted to the work in a general sense, in a big sense, are we looking for ways to concern ourselves with gospel ministry? And then more specifically, are we actually devoted to God's glory?

[30 : 15] How much do we think about making God known in our character and in our works? We talk a lot about it.

We do. That's good. But as you know, talk is cheap. Let's prove it. Let's do the works.

Not to gain something for ourselves, but because we've been given so much in the grace of God, concern ourselves with his glory. Thirdly and finally, we see they were devoted to the people of God.

They're devoted to the work of God, the glory of God, the people of God. It's a simple observation in verse 15. All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith.

It's simple, isn't it? But I don't want to make too much of it, but I also don't want to finish without at least acknowledging the fact that there is a mutual love that is regularly displayed in these letters.

[31 : 18] This is more than an exchange of pleasantries. It's the love that is rooted in our common faith in Christ. Throughout the New Testament, we repeatedly see this imagery that God uses to speak of the church as a people called by God, brought together by God, adopted into the family of God.

and it is from this salvation that we share with one another that comes a unique love and devotion that transcends time and it transcends culture and it transcends personality.

The church really is a unique thing, isn't it? it's the spiritual binding of our hearts by the work of God's spirit that should produce in us a devotion to one another.

Let me see that here. I could go through many verses that command this kind of love. I know that you know them and I won't go through them all now. But I would just say that Christians do need to have a peculiar devotion to each other.

we display this in genuine friendship, concern, care. We display this in encouragement, looking for people to build up. We display this love in overlooking faults.

[32 : 46] Isn't that what Peter said? Was it Peter? That keep on loving each other because love covers a multitude of sins. Do you know what he means by that? He means that when we love people we have a tendency to ignore the ways that they sin against us.

There's a uniqueness to this. That doesn't come natural to us, does it, Marty? Marty gets mad at me about stuff all the time. But there is a uniqueness to this.

Instead of nitpicking everybody and constantly being offended, there is a dynamic to love that is not offended constantly at every little thing that people say and every little disagreement that we have.

There's a uniqueness to this. It's part of our devotion to one another. It reveals itself in forgiveness when we do need to confront those hurts and those offenses. It reveals itself in hospitality, opening our homes.

It reveals itself in assistance, in taking resources that God has blessed us with in order to be a blessing to someone else. And underlying it is the realization that we belong to one another because we belong to God.

[33 : 58] That's the point. we belong to one another because we belong to God. By God's grace we have one another. And we need to do everything we can to show the same kind of devotion that was modeled and commanded by the Lord Jesus.

Let's conclude with the last phrase in verse 15. Paul finishes the same way that he began with grace. grace be with you all.

Grace be with you all. Now if you were to go through and you cared to do this, not that any of you would, but if you cared to do this and you wanted to just examine all of Paul's benedictions in his letters, you'll find that he always speaks of grace and that in Greek, if you care to know this, the grace is always articular, meaning that though in Greek there's not a definite article, in English it would make most sense to put a definite article with it.

So we wouldn't just say necessarily grace in an abstract sense be with you, but we're saying the grace, a specific kind of grace be with you. And most often in Paul's benedictions he attaches a second phrase to it, the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you all.

It's typically, that's the sense of what he means here. And the point is that what he's wishing upon and praying for, for these people in Crete is not grace in an abstract sense, but he's specifically referring to the grace of God that is revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ, which he's covered so many times in this letter.

[35 : 32] What does he mean by grace be with you? He means grace be with you. I hope that God's grace will be so real to you that you'll become a believer, that you will turn from your sin and you'll follow after Christ, and that in following after Christ you will experience the not only regenerative but the renewing effect of the Holy Spirit that transforms your life, that you will receive the blessing of God that comes through knowing and following our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Everything in this letter, including its conclusion, is rooted in the gospel of grace. We are saved by God's grace in Christ.

We are transformed by God's grace. We are blessed by God's grace. We are enabled to do these works that we're talking about in the grace of God. We are devoted by grace.

And the overflow of this grace of God in our lives will produce a devotion to his work, a devotion to his glory, and a devotion to his people.

It will lead us to gospel fidelity. it will lead us to godly behavior. And it will cause us to desire church structures and practices that will support both of those things.

[36 : 55] That's the power of God's grace. And that's the purpose of the letter to Titus. NINGNING