

Devoted and Fruitful

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[0 : 00] Amen. Please open your Bibles once more to the book of Titus. You can find that on page 939 of the Pew Bibles there in front of you, if you're using a Pew Bible.

And we will finish out, officially, finish out the book of Titus this morning. I'm going to conclude it, bring it to a close. So we will be looking at verses 12 through 15 of chapter 3 this morning.

So Titus 3, verses 12 through 15. Would you look there and follow along with me as I read? When I send Artemis or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.

Do your best to speed Zenos the lawyer and Apollos on their way. See that they lack nothing. And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need and not be unfruitful.

All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. This is God's word.

[1 : 19] Let's read. Let's pray over the reading of his word. Would you pray with me? Father God, we thank you for Titus. Lord, we thank you for Paul and this letter that he wrote.

We thank you for the zeal for good works that is displayed here in this book and the ways that you've used this book to build your church. And we pray now that as we bring this book to a close, that we would leave this place stirred up to love and to good works.

And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. We have spent the past eight, now nine weeks together unpacking the book of Titus.

And now this morning, Lord willing, it is time to bring it to a close. In my Bible, it's only two pages long. It doesn't even make it all the way to the end of the second page.

It's just three chapters, just 46 verses. But it is amazing, isn't it? How much rich gospel doctrine is jam-packed into this little letter and how much rich gospel implications are flowing out of it for us and for our lives together.

[2 : 35] As we prayed before the service this morning, Miss Priscilla asked me, she said, I just don't know how you could possibly squeeze one more sermon out of the book of Titus.

Well, we're going to try together this morning. And as we bring the book together to a close, all of our time spent reading this book, studying it, preaching it, just 46 verses, hours together here, worshiping the Lord for the truths proclaimed in the book of Titus.

The question that's put before us now as we bring it to a close, it has to be, did we get the message? Did we get the message of the book of Titus?

Well, I don't know how they get my number, but I, like many of you, am a victim of political text assault. I don't remember signing up for their mailing list, for their text list, but my phone, without fail, just consistently, constantly gets peppered with reminders every single week.

Jonathan, did you know midterm elections are coming up? Jonathan, did you know we need your vote? Jonathan, did you know let your voice be heard? And I try and I try and I try in vain to unsubscribe, make it stop, stop texting me.

- [3 : 55] But somehow they find a way. They're persistent. A new number will show up. A new text will come. They're persistent with these constant reminders of what they want me to do.
- Well, I've not read any scholarly material on this, but I am pretty sure that they got this tactic from the Apostle Paul. His aim, his desire throughout the book of Titus has been that we would see the fruit of good works in the lives of all those who believe the good news.
- And because Paul couldn't text Titus seven times a day, seven times in a week, he wrote a letter to Titus. Titus three chapters, 46 verses.
- And in those three chapters, we see some variation of the phrase good works show up seven times. And he's not subtle, is he? The Apostle Paul.
- The false teachers had come who professed to know God, but they deny him by their works. So they are unfit for any good work. And so he says to Titus, you need to be a model of good works.
- [5 : 13] You are to teach how Christ came to purify a people for himself who will be zealous for good works. And at this point, all the false teachers in Creed are hitting unsubscribe, unsubscribe.
- Stop, stop. Don't want to hear it. Don't want to hear it, Paul. Leave us alone. So he says, Titus, remind them to be ready for every good work. I want you to insist on these things, insist on the message of the gospel so that those who believe God will be careful to devote themselves to good works.
- And here in our passage this morning, as we bring Titus to a close, just in case we have been sleeping through the past two months together, Paul reminds us once again, chapter 3, verse 14, let our people learn to devote themselves to good works.
- Did we get the message? Have we gotten the message of the book of Titus? You know, the message of Titus is very simple. If I could sum up the whole book in a sentence, it would be something like this.
- Those who have believed the good news ought to be devoted to good works. Those who believe the good news ought to be devoted to good works.
- [6 : 36] That's the book of Titus in a sentence. So this morning in our time together, as we bring it to a close, I want to ask the question, how? How?
- How are we, the church at Seaweed Bay, how are we to be devoted to good works? If this church is to be marked by God glorifying, God honoring good works in our neighborhoods, in our communities, in our places of work, in this area of the world, how will we get there?
- And so this morning, as we conclude the book of Titus, we will, by way of overview of the whole book, we'll let Titus as a whole answer that question for us.
- You know, the last airplane flight I took, it had one of those screens on the seat back in front of me. And I had the option to either watch a movie or play a game, or I could watch the flight tracker.
- You know what I'm talking about. It's a flight tracker with this little cartoon plane that makes its way across the United States, slowly going to our destination. And I knew where our destination was, but the flight tracker gave us the big picture.
- [7 : 46] Let me see how we were going to get there. That's a little like what this morning is going to be like. We are going to fly once more over the book of Titus. Get the big picture.
- Destination good works. So this morning, I have four answers to our question. Four answers. This will be our outline this morning if you're taking notes.
- Four answers to the question, how do we devote ourselves to good works so that we're not unfruitful? How do we devote ourselves to good works?
- Four answers to that question this morning. First, Paul says, good works begin with faith.

Answer number one, good works begin with faith. This is step number one. Those who believe the good news are to be devoted to good works. Good works are the fruit.

[8 : 45] They're the result. They're the overflow of belief, of faith in Christ. And so if we don't first have faith in Christ, Paul says we can't do any good works.

This is what Paul told us in chapter one. Would you look there with me? Titus chapter one, verse one. Paul told us why he wrote this letter in the first place. You remember, he said, That's why he's writing.

That's the aim of his ministry. The faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness. So he's aiming for the roots that will then produce the fruits of godliness and good works.

You might remember the election bone is connected to the faith bone. You remember this? The faith bone is connected to the knowledge bone. And real, genuine, saving knowledge is connected with godliness.

It produces godliness. It produces good works. Now here's the thing. Election is invisible. We can't see it with our eyes.

[10 : 06] Faith is invisible. We can't see it. Knowledge is invisible. But you know what isn't invisible? It's godliness. Good works.

They're seen with our eyes. Amanda and I, several months ago, we went to an orchard. And we could not see the intricate system of roots that dug down into the ground and then spread their roots down into the soil.

But I could tell when I saw blueberries on the bush that it was, in fact, a blueberry bush and not an orange tree or an apple tree.

See, godliness and good works are the fruit that make the roots of election and faith and knowledge visible to us and the world around us.

And so Paul says, before we get to it, before we go out of here and try to bear fruit, try to do good works, we had better make sure we have the roots of faith in Christ.

[11 : 12] Isn't this what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7? What does he say? A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.

What kind of tree are you? See, when God saves you, he transforms you from the inside out, from being a diseased tree, in Jesus' example, to being now a healthy tree.

From bearing bad fruit to now bearing good fruit. When God saves you, we are remade. We have a new heart. We have new desires. We have new love for God.

We have new resistance to sin. We have a new root that produces new fruit. Those who believe the good news will bear good fruit.

You will be changed. Do you have a story of that saving faith in your life? Do you have the roots of saving faith in Jesus Christ?

[12 : 19] This is what Paul reminded the church of in chapter 3, verse 3, if you look there. You remember this before and after picture. Chapter 3, verse 3.

Paul says, We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to our various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

That's the fruit that we bore in our lives. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God, our Savior, appeared, He saved us.

Not because of works done by us in righteousness, no. But according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, so that being justified by His grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

The saying is trustworthy. And Titus, 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.

[13 : 31] That's the fruit of faith. See, when I read these verses in chapter 3, by God's grace, I can look at them and say, that's me.

That describes me. I was lost. I was bearing bad fruit. I was showing by my life and by my sin that I did not know God like I thought I did.

I was familiar with Him. I did not have faith in Him. I had learned about Him, but I did not, in fact, love Him. And those invisible roots were made visible by my life of sin.

But by His mercy, God saved me. Do you have a story like that, of saving faith in Christ? If you do this morning, praise God.

That's God's work in you. Don't move past that. If you have a story of God's grace in your life, if you're here this morning and you don't have a story like that, maybe God's calling you today.

[14 : 34] Put your faith in Christ and come to Him. Sow your roots down deep into Him that you might bear fruit of godliness.

We have to start there. Do you know Him? Second, second, we must constantly root our works in the gospel.

We must constantly root our works in the gospel. If we are going to be devoted to good works as a church family, we must constantly root our works in the finished work of Jesus Christ in the gospel.

You see, good works, they begin with faith in Christ, but they don't move on to something else. They continue in faith in Christ. Jesus says, abide in me.

Not just once, but abide in me continually, and you will bear much fruit. I love how Tim Keller puts it. He says, the gospel is not the ABCs of the Christian life.

[15 : 35] The gospel is the A to Z of the Christian life. It's not just the ABCs. This is not Christianity 101. You become a Christian by believing the gospel, and then you live as a Christian by faith in the message of the gospel.

You don't ever move past it. See, the gospel is what drives and defines every good work. Say that again. The gospel is what drives and defines every good work.

We saw that in one little word. Do you remember what it was? It's the word for there in chapter 2, verse 11. As you look there with me, chapter 2, verse 11 of Titus, that one precious word for that gives us the basis and the motivation and the definition for every good work.

Paul says, do this, live this way, pursue godliness, pursue good works, devote yourself to bearing fruit. Why, Paul? For the grace of God has appeared.

Do you see that? For Christ has come. And this is why we spend ourselves for the glory of God. The gospel drives devotion to good works.

[16 : 58] If you've joined us this morning and you're not a Christian, you might wonder, why do Christians act the way they do? Why are they so strange? Why do they do those things that they do?

What is it about Christians that make them act the way they do? Why do Christians act so different? That's what we want the world to say. Why don't they join us in sinning the way that we do?

Why do they serve us without any expectation of repayment or any strings attached? Why don't these Christians seem to stress out or freak out about the same things that I do?

Because, for, the grace of God has appeared. Bringing salvation for all people. Training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, godly lives in the present age.

Church, this is the gospel. Christ has come, ushering God's grace into the world in a way that he never had to that extent before for any who would have it.

[18 : 04] Bringing salvation available by faith, by his life, his death, his resurrection, because of his work through faith in him. Church, we have been saved and we have been trained in godliness.

Why? What's the point? Sometimes I think that we tend to forget the scope of what Christ came to do.

He did not just come to save you. That's too small. There's more to that story. There's more to his aim. Christ came to usher in the kingdom of God.

Christ came to restore all that was lost in the fall. All that has been cursed by sin, including you, including me.

Christ came to recreate a world that has been broken by sin. He came to peel back the layers and the influence of sin and Satan and to usher forth his reign here on earth.

[19 : 14] And it is that work of the gospel that defines all of our good works. No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground.

Y'all didn't know you were getting Christmas music this morning. No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground. He comes to make his blessings flow, far as the curse is found.

As far as the curse is found. Christian, Christ came to undo what was cursed in the fall, including us.

That's why we're different. We have been remade. We have been reclaimed. We have been plucked out of belonging to this world and made citizens of the kingdom of God.

And because Christ became a curse for us, we are no longer under the curse of sin. We've been made his sons and daughters.

[20 : 15] And so now we join him in that mission. That is our mission. It's to fill the earth with the glory of God. To reclaim worshipers of the living God.

To make worshipers of those who have been lost and cursed by the dread of sin. That is the whole point of good works. Our risen King, Jesus, has given us a mission.

Do you know what it is? Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.

And surely I am with you to the uttermost ends of the age. That is the mission of the church. We may do many good things to that end, but church, hear me, our mission is not primarily to be kind people.

Our mission is not primarily to be good citizens, or to feed the hungry, to do works of mercy, to hold the door open when someone is lagging behind, to help someone with their groceries, to say, God bless you at the checkout line.

[21 : 34] Though we may do these things, though we should, as Christians, do these things, those acts of kindness, those works of charity, those good deeds, are props and pointers to the good news of the gospel.

Our primary mission is the message. Church, our primary ministry as a church, the mission God has given us, the risen Christ, our primary ministry is the message of the gospel.

It's the gospel that defines our good works. This is what sets our works apart from every other good work of every other faith, every other charity, every other organization, your kind neighbor down the street who just wants to do good.

Church, what sets our works apart is what drives it and defines it. It's the gospel. It's the mission of Christ. Because Christ has come, bringing salvation to us, church, we go.

We bring the message of the gospel to everyone who will hear it. Because Christ has come training us in righteousness, we go. And we make disciples, training them, teaching them to obey all that He's commanded.

[23 : 01] Because God is at work magnifying His glory, we join Him in magnifying His glory in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Isn't this what we see in this conclusion to Titus? Practical deeds, coming and going, travel plans, acts of mercy, support, encouragement.

Paul says, come to me, a Nicopolis, speed Zenos, the lawyer, Apollos, on their way, see that they lack nothing, meet their needs, help in cases of urgent need, be hospitable, send financial support, meet tangible, practical needs, why?

Not just for the sake of doing good, but for the sake of the mission. And these were servants laboring to build the church, to spread the gospel, to make disciples, to peel back the curse of sin and usher forth the kingdom of God.

Every good work must fit under that banner, or it's not good. Third, third, Paul says, if we're going to be devoted to good works, friend, we must commit to community.

[24 : 17] We must commit to community. So you've, you've believed the gospel, you understand the mission, you're ready to get to work. Paul says, don't go it alone.

And one of the best ways to devote yourself to good works is to commit yourself to a community of people who are also devoted to good works, who also believe the gospel, maybe, maybe even a community that gathers in a certain place every single week to hear the good news of the gospel preached, who gather to worship the risen Lord, and then they're sent out the doors on their way into their daily lives to go about the work of God that he's given them to do.

Do you know any communities like that? That's the local church. Somehow people understand this with CrossFit gems, but they don't seem to get it when it comes to the church.

We want to be independent. We just want to go it alone. We want to do our own thing. Come and go as we please. But friend, that is dangerous and it's not helpful if we want to be devoted and fruitful.

Paul says, the best way for you to live a life that is fruitful and obedient to God is to commit yourself to a body of people who are committed to doing it together.

[25 : 40] Commit to a healthy church. And so we commit to one another. We're commanded, Hebrews chapter 10 verses 24 and 25, we're commanded, let us consider how to stir one another up to love and good, deeds.

Not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another. And all the more as you see the day drawing near. We're commanded to do good to all and especially to those of what?

Of the household of faith. And so commit yourself to a healthy body. Don't just attend. Don't just stay on the fringes. Commit.

Dive in. Commit yourself to a church body that is devoted to the message and to the mission of the gospel. Paul says, commit to godly leadership in the church.

You may remember this was one of the main issues in this community in Crete. The churches were forming, good things were happening, but there were some problems. This is one of the main reasons that Paul wrote the letter to Titus.

- [26 : 52] False teachers had crept in, had come into these churches in Crete, spreading lies, dividing the church, leading people astray. And so Paul tells Titus in chapter 1, verse 5, this is why I left you in Crete, Titus, so that you might put what remained into order and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

False teachers were on the rise. Church was dividing. Division is mounting. Paul tells Titus, appoint elders. Why? It's because in this redeemed community, elders are given by God to lead the church in reflecting and proclaiming the glory of God.

That's what elders do. We're given to the church to lead the church in reflecting and proclaiming the glory of God. So Paul says, appoint shepherds, appoint elders, appoint pastors who will lead in reflecting the glory of God.

No, they're not going to be perfect. Goodness, no. But above reproach, not arrogant, not quick-tempered, faithful to their wives, godly fathers to their children if they have them.

Men of godly character worth imitating. Men who are leading lives worthy of imitation and men who proclaim the glory of God.

- [28 : 24] Paul says, these elders must be able to teach sound doctrine. Why? It's because it's the word of God that builds the church. The word of God alone is what fuels the mission.

So Paul says to Timothy, all scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, training in righteousness that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for what?

Every good work. So the role of elders, church, is to equip you, the saints, with the word of God for good works.

You know, that's the number one thing that matters when you're looking for a church. That's the number one thing that should matter for you when looking for a church.

More important than the music. More important than the size. Is it big? Is it small? More important than does it have the right programs? What does it offer? Where do I feel comfortable?

- [29 : 24] Where do my friends go? The most important question you should ask when you're looking for a church, is this a church that preaches the word of God? Is this a church where the shepherds are leading the flock with the word and with their lives?

Is this a place where you're being led to trust and to follow the chief shepherd, Jesus Christ? Where the attention is not up here, where it is where it belongs.

The focus is on Jesus. Which is why he says we must commit to keeping the gospel central in our church.

commit somewhere where the gospel will be central. A healthy church keeps the gospel at the center and is not easily distracted.

This is what we saw last week, if you remember. Be watchful of distraction, be watchful of division. Chapter 3, last week we saw chapter 3, verses 9 through 11.

- [30 : 26] Paul told us to be watchful of distraction and division. Avoid foolish controversy and if necessary, with tears, remove divisive people.

Remember, discussion that does not lead to devotion might just be a distraction. The devil would love nothing more than for us to gather and to obsess over some minor topics, a minor obscure section of the Bible and never focus on the gospel, never get to work, never grow in godliness, never go and change anything about our lives, never bear any fruit.

The devil would love for us to do that. Always learning but never arriving at knowledge of the truth. He would love for us to divide over some second tier, third tier issue, issues that ignore the unity, the fundamental unity that we have in Christ.

And so church, be watchful of division, be watchful of distraction. We can get so distracted by minor things, even good things, that we forget our mission, that we forget our purpose, that we forget the gospel.

If we are going to be devoted to good works, church, it's got to be together. Commit yourself to the body of Christ.

[31 : 55] Fourth, and finally, if we are to be devoted to good works, we must each take personal responsibility. Personal responsibility.

Paul says in Ephesians chapter 4, when each part of the body, when each member of the body is working properly, every joint, every bone, at work, in its place, doing its job, then the body builds itself up in love.

See, the church is united. The gospel has united the church. And the church is profoundly diverse. And we need each part, each member, each joint to be devoted and fruitful.

We need each member of the body devoted to the work. each one of us must take personal responsibility to go bear fruit, to go do good, to go do gospel ministry right where you are.

Isn't this what we see here in our conclusion? Artemis, Tychicus, Zenos, the lawyer, Apollos, normal people with day jobs, a lawyer, going about the mission of the gospel.

[33 : 18] This is what Paul commanded us in chapter 2. If you look there, he commanded Titus in chapter 2. He said, but as for you, Titus, he says in verse 1, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

Teach what, teach sound doctrine, yes, but don't stop there. Teach, teach what accords with sound doctrine. The sound doctrine is always practical. Teach the, the godliness that we should expect to see in every Christian, every believer, every member.

Godliness, good works, is for you. And you may not even have to leave home to do it. You know, sometimes I think that we think in order for us to really be about good works, to really be doing ministry, we have to get up and uproot ourselves, go somewhere else, start something new, remove ourselves from our current context, from our normal day-to-day lives.

Paul says here in chapter 2, he gives us a model of ministry for every believer right where you are. He says, older men, set the pace.

Older men, set the pace, set the example, demonstrate godly character, urge the young men to be self-controlled. Older women, be reverent, teach what is good, train the young women to love their husbands and their children.

[34 : 43] He gives instructions for Titus, a pastor, and for bond servants, workers in vocational ministry and workers in the lowest, least respected roles in the world. He says, you adorn the doctrine of God, our Savior, right where you are.

The church is not just made up of pastors, praise God, or deacons, or missionaries. It's diverse. Diverse.

God may be calling you, some of you, to vocational ministry. God may be calling you to go overseas, to start some formal ministry, to leave your jobs.

Or maybe, maybe, God may be calling you to bear fruit right where you are. At least, at least start there.

And your ordinary, I'm putting quotes around ordinary, you see that. And your ordinary, day-to-day, normal life. Would you, would you look around yourself and ask, what roles has God placed me in right now?

[35 : 50] Where has God placed me? And what opportunities are there for me right where I am to bear fruit for His glory? Fathers, fathers, what does it look like for you to be devoted to good works in your home?

Husbands, what does it look like for you to be devoted to good works in your home, in your marriages? Mothers, what does it look like for you, as you raise children at home, to be devoted to good works? Wives, what does it look like for you to be devoted to good works? When you go to bed tonight, you lay your head down on the pillow and your mind starts thinking about all the work that you have to do tomorrow when you get to work. Are we thinking, what do I have to do or what opportunities has God given me to bear fruit for his glory? Those are two very different ways to think about our time. Very different ways to think about our opportunities. How can we be about the work of God this week? See, the church is made up of all sorts of different types of people with different giftings, with different opportunities for ministry. There may be people in your sphere of influence that I will never have the chance to reach, but you do. Are you seeking to be devoted to good works right where you are? So here's a practical application for you as we close. You can do this this afternoon in about 10 minutes, okay? Roles and goals. Think about your roles.

Think about your goals. I want you to go home this afternoon, 10 minutes, write down your roles. What are they? God has given me the roles of husband, of father, of pastor, of friend, of son, of citizen. These are different roles, spheres of influence in my life. What roles has God given you?

And then beside them, goals. Goals. I want you to brainstorm and to think specific ways that you can honor the Lord in the place that he's put you. How can you be devoted and fruitful to the Lord this week? See, Christ came to create a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works at home, at work, at church, in the neighborhood, at the ballpark, in the gym. Are you zealous to make much of the glory of God?

Because that's the point, isn't it? Church, our mission is to magnify the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Everything we do must serve that purpose. Any deed that we do that does not serve that grand purpose is not a good deed. And so we enjoy him.

[39 : 02] And we equip the saints. And we evangelize the lost. Do your neighbors know that you're a Christian? Not just that you're kind. Not just that you're moral. Do they know that you want them to know Jesus?

Nine weeks now in the book of Titus have we gotten the message. We leave this place commissioned, church, unto good works. Because Christ has come into our world, rescuing it from the curse of sin, redeeming it from brokenness and rebellion against God, we now go out of this place into the world to accomplish the good works that God has prepared for us to do for the glory of God. For by grace you have been saved through faith.

This is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of work so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Let's get to work, church. Would you pray with me?

Lord, we thank you that you have prepared good works for this body to do. We pray that they would become clear to us as we think and meditate on what opportunities you've given us to bear fruit for your glory. God, I'm excited to see the fruit that you will bring from the labor of these saints.

God, I'm excited to see those who would come into the kingdom because of the faithful gospel proclamation of this body. I'm excited to see those who would be served and loved out of the overflow of our love for you and what you've done for us in Christ. God, thank you for the book of Titus. Thank you for what we've learned in it. We pray that we would get the message.

[41 : 15] We love you, Father. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.