

Themes in Titus

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[0 : 00] to be with you here this morning in Westerhills. I don't think it was 18 years ago. The time passes very, very quickly the younger you get and that's the biggest lie you'll hear from me today.

Quite amazing, but it is good to see you and to know what's happening here in Westerhills. I'm going to look with you this morning at some of the things in Paul's epistle to Titus.

And I've never preached this sermon before, you'll be glad to know, because in a sense it's the kind of sermon that should never need preaching. But anyway, let's read chapter 1, Titus. If you can't find it, it's just before Philemon.

And it's not far away from Jude. Titus chapter 1. Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness, a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time. And at his appointed time, he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour, to Titus, my true son, in our common faith, grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus, our Lord, our Saviour.

The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.

[1 : 58] Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless, not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach, and that for the sake of dishonest gain.

Even one of their own prophets has said, Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons. This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth.

To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and conscience are corrupted. They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.

They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for doing anything good. Well, before we look at this together, let's sing again, Oh, how good it is.

When the family of God dwells in... One of the reasons I like the book of Titus is because the Apostle Paul is fairly blunt and straight to the point.

[3 : 58] But a lot of what he says is obvious. And one of his big themes is that if you're a Christian, you should be good.

It is fairly obvious. I mean, it's not a revelation that I'm bringing you from pit and wean that you've never heard before. It is fairly obvious.

But you know, Paul labors the point. He tells Titus to appoint elders in every town and one of the qualifications for the eldership is that they should love what is good.

There in verse 8, chapter 1. They should love what is good. Now, there was a mob in the church and they didn't love what is good.

And at the end, the very end of chapter 1, he says of them, they are unfit for doing anything good. And that's almost a compliment when you take what he said about them earlier on.

[5 : 08] He says they're liars, brutes, lazy gluttons. It'd be up for a hate crime if you lived in Edinburgh. You know, this testimony he says is true. They are unfit for doing anything good.

And then he talks about the young women. And, well, he tells the older women to be reverent and not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good and to teach it to the younger women.

Similarly, he tells Titus that Titus should be good and that Titus should set an example to the young men and the young men should be good.

And he says all the people of God should be eager to do what is good. There at the end of chapter 2. And then at the beginning of chapter 3, he says God's people should be obedient and they should be ready to do whatever is good.

And then twice more in the chapter 3, he says in verse 8, those who have trust in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.

[6 : 27] And then in the third last verse, our people must learn to devote themselves to be doing what is good. Now, I don't know all that was going on in Crete. I don't know all that's going on in Plain and Weemore and Westerales.

But you don't need to read between the lines with the Apostle Paul. There were bad people in the church. There were bad people and there were bad people doing bad things.

And Paul is going on and on. As you maybe felt I did as I chose all these verses. Two in chapter 1 and three references in chapter 2.

Three references. Eight references all together. About being eager to be good. He's making a point and he's making it. You know, it seems an obvious point.

And obviously, he defines what good is as far as he's concerned. A good action for the Apostle Paul is something that's inspired by God.

[7 : 42] When we become Christians, we receive the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit has conversations with our spirit. For example, the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.

I mean, we often doubt, am I a Christian at all? And the Holy Spirit will say, don't be daft. Of course you are. The Spirit witnesses with our spirit. But also, the Spirit says yes and the Spirit says no. If you look at chapter 2, it talks about the gospel. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness. That's what the Holy Spirit does. Within us.

It teaches us to say yes to godliness. So, there's a difference between the goodness of the world. There are a lot of good people who have no time for faith or for God or for Jesus.

A lot of good people. I'm not saying that. I'm not saying that for a minute. But what I am saying is that the Christian, their desire should be inspired.

[8 : 48] And inspired comes from the word in spirit. And in spirit means the spirit is in. So, the Spirit's living in you. He's saying, do this.

Or don't do that. Six months ago, we got a dog. To keep us fit. I didn't need to be fit, but Joan said I did. And I felt I was fit for anything.

I really did. And we got a dog. And it's a bit, it's like a volcano on a leash. It's how you would describe it. We left the dog around at Philip and Kimmy's.

But it's caged. Because there wouldn't be a house, maybe there'd be a Westerhales where we went out this morning. And the number of times we say, when he does something, that's a good boy.

And another times we say, no. And he now understands what no means. He used to think that no means do it again with greater enthusiasm. And as we go on in the Christian life, we begin to understand and we begin to know what the Holy Spirit's saying to us.

[10 : 02] Do that. That's godly. That's good. So there's a whole world of difference between what the Bible means. There's a whole dimension of difference between what the Bible means by being good and what the world means.

If you're going to be good, according to what we have here in Titus, if the Spirit says no, then no it is.

And if the Spirit says yes, then yes it is. There's a divine dimension to goodness. And I wonder what was going on in Crete, that he had to go on and on about them being good.

I don't know what it was, but I have a feeling the church in Crete was almost out of control. Because that's another of the themes in Titus.

In chapter 1 and verse 5, Paul sends Titus this letter and he tells him he wants the church straightened out.

[11 : 05] That's the language that he uses in verse 5. The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished. He had to sort them out.

And when you read the rest of the letter, Paul takes up another theme and it's about being self-controlled. And he says the elders should be self-controlled.

Chapter 1 verse 8. Then he says the older men should be self-controlled. I don't know what they were up to. Chapter 2 verse 2. Then the women should be self-controlled. Chapter 2 verse 5.

Chapter 2 verse 6. The young men should be self-controlled. And chapter 2 and verse 5, it tells you that everyone, chapter 2 and verse 12, I should say, everyone should be self-controlled.

See, it teaches us, the gospel teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives.

[12 : 06] It strikes me that the church in Crete, I don't know what was going on, but they were out of control. Imagine I came to Wester Hills. I says, well, and I said to you, you know, I've got a word from God this morning.

The word for the pastor. Daniel's no here, but you can tell him. He needs to be self-controlled. What's going on here?

And the elders. And they need to be self-controlled. And see, you older women, those of a certain age, you need to be self-controlled. You say, what's going on about this morning?

And the young ones. Young women, young men. You need to be self-controlled. If you're really Christians, you'll be self-controlled. You'll say, what does he know that we don't know? We don't know what was going on in Crete.

But what I do know is that it was a church, a church that was going out of control. Why? Well, there's some hints.

[13 : 08] There's some hints. There was a group there. And this group were called the circumcision group. They were kind of half Jews, half Christians.

And Paul says of them that they were rebellious. Chapter 1 and verse 10. And then they were talkers. They could talk the talk. And you know, they could spew out words.

And they talked a lot about God. And they talked a lot about the Bible. And they talked a lot about the Judaism and circumcision and the feasts and the Old Testament.

And they were talkers. But they were also deceivers. I'm not too sure where the deceit came. But I'm pretty sure that they were teaching things that weren't from God.

And this was splitting up, splitting up families. You see it there in chapter 1. Paul says, they must be silenced. Verse 11.

[14 : 13] Because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach. And then, this terrible indictment. And that, for the sake of dishonest gain, they were making some money at it.

They were bad people. They were bad people in the church. And Paul says, even one of their prophets described them as liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.

And Paul re-emphasized, this testimony is true. What this prophet among this group had said. This is true. And he says that they're detestable.

They're disobedient, unfit for doing any good thing. And I think you need to tie that up with all this emphasis on the pastors and the elders and the women and the men and the young people.

For everybody getting some control back. They were like a church out of control. And I believe that's why Paul emphasizes the need for godly, godly goodness.

[15 : 31] The need, the need to have a conversation with the indwelling Holy Spirit. Because Paul didn't want the church that he'd started in Crete to go out of control.

And it looked like these bad religious people. it looked like they were going to bring the church in Crete to an end. And that's why I believe Paul goes on and on and on that if you're a believer then you need to be good.

And not good in terms of a worldly definition but good in terms of obeying the word that comes from the Spirit which is always in accordance with the word that is in the Bible.

Let me say two other things this morning about being good. It's the gospel that causes people to be good in the godly sense that I'm talking about.

A lot of people will say that their religion makes them good and there's no doubt that religion impacts some people's lives for good other people's lives for bad.

[16:50] But it's this relationship with Jesus. If you look at chapter 2 and if you look at verse 11 this is what it says the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared.

That's what happened. The grace of God this love of God that you don't deserve this love appeared in Jesus Christ. This love appeared on Calvary's cross and you don't deserve it and you're told that this God loves you this God cares for you this God died for your sins.

This grace has appeared to all men and some have accepted it. And then it says this it teaches us to say no.

this gospel teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled upright and godly lives in this present age.

You see the gospel comes with the Holy Spirit and he makes your body his dwelling place and the Holy Spirit speaks to your spirit and mostly through the word.

[18:24] I believe there is a rhema word and a logos word and it's worth doing a study on that. I believe that the spirit it speaks mostly through the word.

There might be people sitting here this morning and you're saying God is speaking to me right now. Well if if the spirit of God lives in you and you're committed to living a gospel life and lifestyle then you'll say no to worldly passions and ungodliness and you'll say no to all ungodliness the gospel causes people to say yes.

Being good in a godly way isn't a natural human achievement.

achievement. A lot of people are good and it's a natural human achievement. There's a lot of people without a thought of God in their head and they want to be good.

They want to be good to the poor. They want to be good to their neighbours. There is a desire for goodness that is at the height of humanity's aspirations.

[19:59] But that isn't what the Bible is talking about. The Bible is talking about being filled with the Holy Spirit who converses with your spirit and who helps you to say yes and no.

That's why Galatians 5 the fruit of the Spirit is goodness. that's what happens. Apples come from apple trees.

Oranges from orange trees. And so goodness comes from the indwelling Spirit. What happens is people hear the gospel and they're enabled by the Spirit to respond to the gospel and they receive Christ and the Holy Spirit lives in their life and he begins a work in you so that you are able both to will and to do for his good pleasure.

The Holy Spirit helps you to have the will to do what is right and good and upright. And he helps you to do what is right and good and upright.

You can't do it without the Holy Spirit. You can't live a godly obedient to the Bible type life without the Holy Spirit.

[21:30] And that's why today I think we should be longing for more of God's Spirit in our lives.

Longing that he who began a good work in us that he'll bring it to completion sometimes I complain when I know that I've done wrong and I'm in the wrong and my witness has been bad as the Lord.

It seems to take so long, so long. But I go back to that promise in Philippians 1 and verse 6, he who began a good work in you, the God that began that work, that the Edinburgh Christian to say in the Usher Hall, all those years ago, 53 years ago, he promises to bring it to completion.

You need the Spirit to live a good, godly life. But the second thing and the final thing, you need the Spirit to live an effective Christian life.

That's teaching in Titus. Again, look at chapter 2 and verse 4. It's talking about the older women training the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind and to be subject to their husbands so that no one will malign the word of God.

[23:08] And it's in these ordinary things that people see the difference in Christian living. If you go to the second last verse of Titus, he's talking about our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives.

You see what I'm saying here? It's, if these young women were lazing around with all kinds of lethargy and all their, all their, their doing, just letting their home and their husbands and their families go and he's saying to these older women, you teach them what is good about everyday

living and if you don't do that and if they're not living those good godly lives, then the word of God will be maligned.

And a lot of people are right when they say, huh, calls herself a Christian. They're right. People have said that to me and I've just said, you're right. People have said to me, yeah, you call yourself a Christian.

I say, I do. I do. I said, I'm saved by grace. I'm not perfect, but I'm going to be. I'm going to be. God. I'm going to be. I'm going to be.

I'm going to be. And again, it seems so obvious that if you're living out this good godly life, then the word of God, people start to pay attention to it.

[24 : 44] People start to say they've got something. And the problem with the church in Scotland today is the major section of the church seems to be determined to be conformed to this world, to go the world's way.

And you know what people say? If you're going down the same road as me, I'm going to hell and I don't want you to come with me.

I want something that's new and different and fresh and pure and good and godly. And it's when we live that life, believe me, believe me, it's when you live that life, no matter how people may malign you.

I knew a chap who was an electrician and he was called to the ministry. And I met him when I went to Aberdeen at the age of 18.

And he found the first year at university absolutely unbelievably difficult. I dare say there's a big difference between studying philosophy and theology and being an electrician.

[26 : 01] And in those days, if you failed, you were sent down. So it's as if you've been sent to the gallows and you had to appear before the university court. And they all questioned whether he was the right man to be a student.

And he witnessed to that whole university court. It's like Martin Luther. Here I stand.

I can do no other. It's like all the martyrs. Last year there were 120, last century there were 120,000 Christian martyrs.

There's over 100,000 Christians in prison in North Korea. They will not change because they've been changed by the unchanging one.

And they take their stand. And so the word of God is respected. And the opposition is silenced.

That's taught in Titus as well. You see what it says there in chapter 2?

[27 : 08] It's talking about the young men and living the life, living a good and a godly life. And it says this, those who oppose you will be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

They have nothing bad that can make up lies and they will. They can make up stories and they will. But at the end of the day they know what you know. There's nothing bad that they can say about you because the spirit of God that lives in you is a spirit who longs that you be conformed to the image of Christ.

And if you live the life, if you look at verse 10, it makes the gospel attractive. Look at it there. They will make the teaching about God, our Savior, attractive.

Living the life, it attracts people. You know, there will be people in heaven. We'll say to people in this church, and these will be people that you never met, I became a Christian because of your godly life and your godly living.

And you'll say, but I really didn't know you, but I watched you and I saw you and that's what attracted me to the Savior. you. So my message to you today isn't you need to try harder to be good.

[28 : 30] My message to you today is to listen to the word and to the Holy Spirit. and when he says no, then no it is.

And when he says yes, then yes it is. My message to you today is that if you are saved, if you are a Christian, then the desire of your heart is to be eager for what is good.

And I believe that's why Paul emphasizes it. because the world then, like the world now, says just do your own thing and be your own person. Be the person that you want to be.

I believe that if you have responded to the gospel, then the Spirit of God is saying, you be the person that God wants you to be.

and it's only the gospel that can do that. I think you can make a decision to turn over a new leaf.

[29 : 40] A lot of people do, but it's the gospel that gives you a new life. And that gospel only comes through Jesus Christ. There's no other way. There's no other way and for that truth I would die.

And I say that honestly. For that truth I would die. There's no other way apart from through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do it and live it out and the gospel becomes attractive. The gospel makes an impact. Do it and living out and people won't malign the word of God.

And they'll certainly know that they've got nothing negative to say about you. Take a wee while to read Titus. And look at these themes about being good, about being self-controlled, about the consequence of the gospel being the good godly life, about living the good godly life, commending the gospel and making the teaching about God our Savior attractive.

Amen. Amen. And God bless to us the reading and the preaching of his word.