

Titus Part 7 Titus 3:9-15 FCC 11-3-19 The Fruit of Leadership

Including today we have spent seven Sundays journeying through Titus, studying the big rocks along the path- the big themes, and working our way toward the mountain. Last week we set our feet on the foundation of this mountain. Today we are going to set foot on this mountain- the main theme that ties everything together in this letter. Turn to Titus 3:9-15.

*3:9 But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.*

*3:10 As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him,*

*3:11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.*

*3:12 When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.*

*3:13 Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing.*

*3:14 And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.*

*3:15 All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.*

### **Paul's unusual last words: good works**

First, we will look at Paul's last words in this letter and how they point to the mountain, or big theme in the letter.

So after his second statement of the gospel that we talked about last week, in chapter 3:3-8, Paul starts wrapping up this letter. He mentions some things to avoid, including divisive persons after the proper steps to peacemaking have been taken, and then starts giving final instructions to his associates about who needs to be going where and when they need to go there. After this would be a natural place to give his final greeting and close the letter, which is normally what he does. But he doesn't do that here- he slips in one other thing at the last minute before his final greeting. He says:

*3:14 And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.*

Doesn't that seem a bit random? A little disorganized? Or is it because this is so important that Paul has to slip it in before his closing? And maybe the reason it's so important is because it's something he has been saying all along and doesn't want anyone to miss the point. If that's the case, maybe we need to go

back and see if we've missed something. We need to see if there are any connections between something in this verse and things he's talked about before in this letter. If you reread Titus you will find that there is one term Paul uses in this last exhortation that he's used several times before in this letter: **good works**.

### **Tracing the mountain theme in Titus**

So let's trace this term through the letter.

*1:16 They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.*

*2:7 Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity,*

*2:14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

*3:1 Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,*

*3:8 The saying is trustworthy, and 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. These things are excellent and profitable for people.*

*3:14 And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.*

Six times in 3 short chapters! Must be important! And it's not just the frequency of this topic that shows its importance. It's the way he uses it. (next slide) Think back to last week: we looked at the two summary statements of the gospel that Paul makes here: 2:11-14 and 3:3-8. Paul ends both of his statements of the gospel with a reference to good works. Why? Because good works are the ultimate outcome of the gospel in our lives. It's a simple progression:

### **GOSPEL>CHARACTER>GOODWORKS**

When we believe the sound doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ, it transforms our character, and Christ-like character naturally expresses itself in good works. Good works, or fruit, are the ultimate outcome of the gospel that Paul is longing to see in the churches. It is the big theme that echoes through this letter: once in chapter 1, twice in chapter 2, and three times in chapter three. It's the theme that ties together all the other topics we've studied in this whole letter:

- It's the reason why Paul trained and sent Titus
- it's the reason why church leaders need to have strong character
- it's the reason why false teaching must be stopped

- it's the reason why the older generation must mentor the younger generation
- it's the reason why the people of God must submit to one another
- it's the reason why our character must match our beliefs
- it's the reason why division in the church must be avoided

so that the church of Jesus Christ can effectively demonstrate the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior through good works. Paul wants the churches he planted to be fruitful! He's not asking Titus to appoint leaders just for the sake of having leaders, but because he wants them to lead the churches on Crete in being fruitful.

Author Michael Frost words it well: "...doing what is good emerges from an experience of God's grace. We do not do good in order to earn God's favor or to impress him with our hard work and diligence. Rather, when we have been set free from guilt by God's unending forgiveness, we are free indeed to serve the poor and preach the gospel."

### **Cutting through the clouds**

So that's how it all fits together. That's the mountain theme that is the reason for the other topics Paul writes about in this letter. But the term "good works" might seem a little vague. What kind of good works is Paul talking about here? Interestingly, he doesn't go into any detail about what good works the churches on Crete should do. He just gives some general principles:

#1: he tells us **what to avoid** as we do good works:

*3:9 But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.*

*3:10 As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him,*

*3:11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.*

The bottom line here is that it takes maturity on the part of every member of a church to make it possible for the church to do good works in a way that is, as Paul says, good and profitable (profitable obviously meaning beneficial to people- he's not talking about making money). If we let ourselves get trapped in theological conundrums, or we treat people differently based on who they are related to, or we handle issues in a way that groups people according to their differences and forms sides and draws battle lines, or fussing about non-essentials or minute details, all of a sudden anything we endeavor to do, no matter how good it may sound, becomes worthless. We have to ask ourselves, how do we go about doing ministry or handling issues in ways that will bring

people in the church together instead of pull them apart? How do we proceed in a way that is best for the development of individual people in the church and the health of the church as a whole? Remember, the medium is the message. The way we go about doing good works will determine whether those good works ultimately are good or worthless, profitable or unprofitable. If we are all focused on being fruitful, a lot of problems will become dim and their darkness shattered by the light that is shining through us.

#2: he tells us the **general nature** of the kinds of good works that will make us fruitful. Verse 14 says “so as to help cases of urgent need.” Bill Gaither says it this way in one of his songs: I don’t wanna spend my time writin songs to answer questions that nobody’s even askin anyhow; if the house is burnin to the ground there’s just no time to stand around arranging all the pictures on the wall.” The question to ask is, are we meeting immediate needs, needs that people are feeling? And are we preparing ourselves to meet the needs they will most likely feel tomorrow? The bottom line is that our good works need to be relevant, they need to make a real difference. Paul doesn’t give the church a detailed list of good works they should do or the exact ways to do them because needs can change, or the most effective way to go about meeting those needs may change. Paul is expecting the churches on Crete to use scripture, their combined godly wisdom, empathy, and good old common sense to figure it out for themselves.

Scripture gives us many examples of good works that will almost always be relevant, such as caring for the poor and orphans and widows. But God doesn’t spoon-feed us specific instructions. He equips us and sends us out. So if we are going to define good works based on the information Paul gives us in this letter, we would say: Good works are any deeds that are motivated by the gospel of Christ, done with the character of Christ, using the resources and abilities given by Christ, to demonstrate life in the Kingdom of Christ in relevant ways.

#3: Paul uses a few **key words** to describe how we go about doing good works (and we will conclude with this): 2:14 says we should be zealous, 3:1 says we should be ready, and 3:8 and 3:14 both say we should be devoted.

Zealous: in other words, passionate. What are you passionate about? What unmet needs bother you most? What do you truly want to do for God or in God’s name?

Ready: in other words, prepared or equipped: gifted. You can have spiritual gifts, natural abilities, or acquired skills that make you ready to do something. What are those?

Devoted: what are you willing to commit your time and energy to on a consistent basis? What ministry is an integral part of your life?

There's a little formula that J. Robert Clinton developed that clarified this for me: **Gifts + passion = destiny**

If we are gifted to do something but not passionate about it, that will not make us fruitful. God can change that- he can spark a flame in you for something that you didn't feel strongly about before.

If we are passionate about something but not gifted to do it, that will not make us fruitful either. And God can change that too- he can develop in you the abilities you need.

However, if we are both gifted to do something and we are passionate about it, not only will it make us fruitful but it will point us to our calling in life, our destiny.

The gospel of Christ working in our lives will produce in each one of us a zeal, or passion, for some kind of ministry and along with that God will give each one of us a set of spiritual gifts or abilities to contribute to that ministry. That's on the individual level. But the vision of Jesus is to form a people, a body, a household- those are corporate terms- he want us to work together as a whole, as one. So the question is, what are our passions collectively as a body? What are our gifts collectively as a body? These together will point us to our destiny as a body, as the church. But how do we find out what our passion and gifts are as a church? You talk about your passions and gifts as individuals, and find where they intersect. God will draw you in toward those collective gifts and passions. When you discover your collective gifts and your collective passions, it will point you to your collective destiny. That will be the ministry that forms your identity and your mission as a church; it will shape everything you are and do.

Each person who is part of this church is here because God brought you here. And based on what we see in Titus, he brought you here because your gifts and passions intersect with the gifts and passions of everyone else in a way that God will use to move his church toward its destiny. Each one of us has a type of leadership responsibility to not only apply our gifts and passions in ministry here but also to bring out the best in each other- to help each other discover their God-given gifts and passions, so that together we can be fruitful as a church.

Finally, as you search for a pastor, keep in mind that pastors, like every Christian, are gifted and passionate in some areas more than others. Seek a

pastor whose gifts and passions complement those of the church so that he can help you achieve your destiny.