

# Titus: A Model for Good Works



This is exit 17 in the New Testament, or exit 56 if you begin from the book of Genesis. Let me give you a little background on the book of Titus before we actually begin to bring this book to our attention. Paul has left Titus in Crete. He gives two reasons for leaving him there. First, he wants Titus to set things that still remain in order. Secondly, he wants him to appoint elders in every town on the island of Crete. It is our belief that the Apostle Paul did not found the church on the island of Crete. The reason I believe this is because in Acts chapter 2 when the day of Pentecost was fully come and the Holy Spirit fell upon the Church, the people asked if the men who were speaking were Galileans. Then they asked how they were able to each hear in their own native language. Then the Bible begins to list the different languages that were represented there. There were people from the island of Crete there that day, who heard the gospel, and were anointed with the Holy Spirit of God. They possibly received Jesus Christ, were baptized, and then went back home to the island of Crete, and I think they talked about it. Therefore, it is very possible that the churches on this island actually were founded, not by apostles, but by Christians themselves who were saved on the day of Pentecost.

Now, the Apostle Paul and Titus have been to the island. Paul has been teaching them, but he has to leave. He leaves Titus, a young man, there. He gives him those two primary responsibilities of setting in order everything that remains, and appointing elders in every town on the island. So Paul is writing a letter to Titus because he is going to send some people

to him, and He wants Titus to leave the island and meet him in Nicopolis because Paul is going to spend the winter there. This letter to Titus, like the letters to Timothy, is considered one of the Pastoral Epistles.

As we travel down Route 66, we are going to be journeying through one of Paul's letters to one of his young pastors that he has given some great responsibility to. The book of Titus gives us a model for good works, and so it is the theme and title of our lesson. In Paul's letter to Titus, there are three big passages that stick out in my mind.

1. Chapter 1:1-4 - In the introduction, Paul introduces himself as a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. He says the very reason he is a slave of God and an apostle for Jesus Christ is because of the faith of the elect and their knowledge of the truth, which leads to godliness. Then he talks about how in hope they have the hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began and has now manifested that to them through his preaching.

2. Chapter 2:10-14 - This is another passage that jumps out at me with a beautiful picture of the salvation we have in Jesus Christ.

3. Chapter 3:3-8 - Paul closes out the letter to Titus with another great passage, where he again he talks about the great salvation we have in Jesus Christ.

We are not going to focus on those passages because those passages are recorded for the purpose of revealing to us the basis out of which flows the life we are to live for Christ. On what basis do we live the life we live for God? That foundation is what God has done for us in Christ. I want you to see that the imperative to live a good life is based on the indicative of what God has done for us in Christ. The imperative is based on the indicative. An imperative and indicative has to do with grammar. The Bible says the command to act (what you and I are to do be doing) is based on something, and Scripture teaches that Christian behavior is based on Christian belief. If you really believe what Christ did for you is true, it will

cause you to live a life that is radically different. That's the book: godly behavior, Christian behavior is based on godly belief, or Christian belief. Years ago, I taught a simple sermon series called, The Mind of Christ. I laid out the principle that a godly mind produces godly thoughts, godly thoughts produce godly beliefs and godly beliefs produce godly behavior. In his letter to Titus, Paul is concerned about the church on the island of Crete. He is primarily concerned about their behavior; therefore, he wants Titus to appoint pastors in every town. He wants Titus to finish teaching the things that Paul couldn't finish. That is what he instructs Titus about in this letter.

## **Church Elders**

Let me say a couple of more things, and then we will get into the letter itself and the main theme, which is about good works. You have to remember the island of Crete was known for a sinful culture. Therefore, Paul knew that it was important that we have strong leaders in the church, so he tells Titus to appoint elders. There are three things Paul covers in this letter in order to be appointed by Titus as an elder in the church at Crete. You have to be a person of:

- 1. Biblical Character**
- 2. Biblical Conduct**
- 3. Biblical Conviction**

The reason is because when he finishes out chapter 1, he is going to talk about what the Cretans say about themselves. There are communities of people who have their own culture. People within a culture can talk about themselves and use words about themselves that those of us who are on the outside of that culture can't use. If they say it among themselves, they understand what they are talking about. But if we say it about them, it is a different story. That is exactly what this passage is dealing with. That is why Paul quotes that even one of the Cretans, a prophet among them, says that Cretans are liars, animals, and lazy gluttons. Imagine being raised in a culture where you are known as being liars and you can't trust

what is said; where the people are so evil they are just like beasts, they are animalistic in nature, and they are lazy, they are gluttons! Now Paul didn't say this about them, this is what one of their own prophets said about them. So Paul is concerned because he knows the Church should mirror the community in which it ministers, but while it is mirroring the community, it cannot reflect the culture of the community. This is why Paul is writing to Titus. We do not colonize in the church; we evangelize. One thing I think that hurts the Church today is that many times in a community, we colonize. We have enough churches that we can go to the church that is just like us, not reflecting our spiritual side, but reflecting our social side or economic side. There are some people who are just not comfortable with people who are not like them. That should not be why you choose a church. Your church should mirror your community. While we can mirror the community, we cannot mirror or reflect the culture of the community that is sinful.

So when Paul lays out the thought of elders, the people are going to oversee the church, the people who are going to shepherd God's people, they have to be different. They have to be men of biblical character, biblical conduct, and biblical convictions because they are going to be confronting people who are living a lifestyle of sin. This is what chapter 1 is all about.

## **Teach Sound doctrine**

In chapter 2, Paul tells Titus to preach sound doctrine. Then he specifically tells him to address old men, old women, and young men. He leaves out young women because young women receive the brunt of what he tells the old women to be doing. He tells the older ladies in the church they ought to have a ministry toward young ladies, and then, he specifically says they are to train the young ladies to do. He gives specific admonitions to the older men, as well as young men.

## Model of Good Works

Then, after addressing the old men, old ladies, and young men, Paul stops before telling him what to say to the bondservants, and tells Titus that he is to be a model of good works. Let's look at Titus 2:7; *"Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us."*

This is what should be happening today in our churches with the men who are elders. They have the primary responsibility of overseeing God's Church, which is the Greek word translated bishop. Elder refers to the man, primarily in his maturity in Christ. The Bible also calls him a pastor, which describes how the elders are to do the work of overseeing the church, which is as a shepherd overseeing his flock.

Let me pause and say that it is my belief that elder, bishop, and pastor refer to the same person, same office. Elder refers to the man, bishop refers to the office, and pastor describes the work the elder does as a bishop. Now in the infancy of the Church, especially at Crete, the Church didn't call their own pastors, Titus appointed them. We still have churches today that follow that model and other people appoint their pastors for them. But in the Baptist church, and in the maturity of the church age, we believe that a church can and should call its own pastor. A man who leads the church must be a model of good works.

Can you imagine Paul writing to Titus to tell him what to say to the older men, the young men, and the older women, and then reminding him that he, as a young man, ought to be the model of what good works is all about? I will never forget, years ago when I was at Owen's Chapel Baptist Church, a lady come out one Sunday and said to me, "Brother Ricky, you are a model preacher." Wow, I got just a little puffed up to be honest with you! My number one critic is my wife, and I could not wait to tell her about what was said about me being a model preacher, because many times after a sermon, I get my critique notes from her. A few days later, she

came back and said, "You know what the definition of model is, right?" When I said no, she said, "An imitation of the real thing."

That is not how model is being used here. ☺ Model is being used as a pattern. When we think about the book of Titus, I want you to see the overall theme of Titus as Paul telling a young pastor that he is the model. If someone wanted to know what the Christian life looked like, he was their picture.

## **Adorn the Doctrine of God**

So why is Paul going to lay that responsibility on Titus? It is because the next thing he tells us, in chapter 2:10, is the people in the church adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. It says, "*...not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn doctrine of God our Savior.*" This closes out the section where he talks about older men, older women, young men, and bondservants. To the bondservants in particular, he said he wants them to live a certain type life because as bondservants, they adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. I believe this can also be applied the older men, older women, young men, young women, and everyone in the church, no matter what class of person. We need to understand that we adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

This word, "*adorn*," is where we get our English word *cosmetics*. It literally means 'to order, to set in place, to systemize.' Just about every lady I know uses cosmetics. We guys appreciate that fact, not that there was anything wrong before you started, but it is amazing what a woman can do with them. I love to watch my wife go through her system as she orders how she looks. She puts her best face on most times. A woman can bring out her best with those things she has at her disposal.

That is the picture here. The church adorns, and to switch the word, the church models the doctrine of God our Savior. The church models the teachings of God our Savior! I want you to picture a model, not an imitation of the real thing, not a model car, or a model tractor, but a live

model. Now most of us think of a live model as ladies who model for the fashion industry. Fashion designers do not put their designs on a mannequin for a fashion show; they put it on a live person. When those models take the runway, retailers in the audience are going to make a decision about what fashions they are going to buy, knowing they are a consumer. So those fashion designers will choose models who will show off and display what these fashions can really do for a man or a woman. That is you, a model of the teaching of Jesus Christ. Your runway is your home, your job, the place where you vacation, the place where you recreate, the place where you party. You and I model the teachings of Jesus Christ. You are a model for salvation by grace through faith. That is why some people don't want to be saved. Some people don't really believe the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith because of your life...They think, *Are you kidding me! Are you telling me that you can be like him and be saved, and still live like he lives? Then why should I be saved?* What they are really saying is that if the doctrine didn't do any more for you than it did, why should I trust in it?

So how are you wearing this doctrine of justification by faith before a lost world? How are you wearing it at home before your family members? Honestly, you are the model. This doctrine called security of the believer, this doctrine called church membership, and church life; you model it. God puts everything the world is going to see about the teaching of God on a live person, a sinner who has been transformed by grace into a saint, and He expects us to wear it, to live out what we say is true! How are you doing as a model of the teachings of God our Savior? It is so cool that God is so proud of His teachings about salvation that He puts it on people and expects them to show it off to the world!

After talking to the bondservants and telling them to adorn the doctrine of the teachings of God, Paul talks about how the grace of God has appeared to all people. He talks about what that has done for them, how they have been trained by the grace of God to renounce worldliness and evil passions. He says they have been called to a new standard of living, and

are now waiting on the appearance of Jesus Christ. Paul alludes back to what Jesus did when He came the first time when he says in chapter 2:14, (Jesus Christ) *"...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."* Not only is Titus a model of good works to the church, not only is the church a model of good works, it the very purpose to which we are saved, according to this passage. You are not saved from Hell and purified for Heaven, not in this letter. In this letter, you are redeemed from, not eternal punishments in Hell, but from a life of lawlessness, a life of sinfulness. God purified you, to be His people, to be His possession. You do not belong to you; you have been bought with a price, and you belong to God.

Paul says, Titus, tell them that. God made you His own so that you would be zealous; you would eagerly desire good works! This word, *"good,"* basically means, 'excellent, choice, works.' You were not redeemed from sin just to live an ordinary, everyday, mundane kind of life. You were saved and purified to God to live a life of choice, excellent works!

## **Evidence of, not Basis for, Salvation**

In chapter 3, Paul, again, talks about our salvation, and then in verse 8, it says, *"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."* Then in verse 14, *"And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful."* Good works are evidence of your salvation, not the basis for your salvation. Paul wants to be careful here when he tells Titus this, because he doesn't want anybody to believe it is their good works that cause them to be saved and be in a right relationship with God. Good works cannot redeem you from sin. Once you have been redeemed from sin, the evidence of the fact that you have been redeemed from sin is a life of good works! Honestly, you really shouldn't have to tell anyone you are a believer. Anyone who



knows who you used to be should be able to look at your life and know beyond a shadow of a doubt that there has been a change in you. There is something different. Even the people you have only known for the last several years since you have been saved should still be seeing a change in you, as you move further and further away from the image of Adam, and more and more into the image of Jesus Christ. That is because good works, the life we live for the glory of God, actually is the evidence that we really are saved.

## **Be Ready, Be Courteous**

The last point is in Titus 3:1. Paul says, "*Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work...*" Then in the next verse, he tells Titus to tell the people on the island of Crete who are believers to be courteous to all people. Now, Titus 2:11 says that the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all people, and the context is that you have old men, old women, young men, young women, and bondservants in the church. You have a cross section of people. When he throws the bondservants in with the free, that is radical. That passage is teaching that the grace of God appears to all classes of people, not just your class, but all classes. Chapter 3 says we are to be courteous to all people. So reason why is because the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all people. God is saving people from all walks of life!

There is a tendency for you and I to see and treat some people differently than other people based on who they are and their economic and social condition. As a matter of fact, some of us treat those who are sinful differently. Paul says if you are going to be ready for every good work, be ready for every opportunity God brings to you, you have to be courteous to all people. Sometimes, in the Church, we forget we used to be a sinner. Sometimes we forget what God saved us from! Sometimes we forget what God redeemed us out of, so when we see people where we used to be, some of us have this tendency to not believe salvation can come to them

as it has come to us. Paul is trying to tell Titus to get the church ready for this truth: Yes, they are liars; yes, they are animals; yes, they are lazy gluttons, but so were you but for the grace of God!

How do you get ready? You get ready by making sure you are living a life that is modeling the teachings of God our Savior. Can you imagine what would happen if you were a model getting ready to go out on that runway, and all of a sudden, you realize that you don't make this dress look the way it ought to look? In real life, that designer would jerk that dress off and put it on another model. God doesn't do us that way. He is patient and kind. That is why Paul tells Titus to teach them to devote themselves to good works; this has to come from you! How does salvation by grace through faith fit you? Do you believe you are not wearing it right? You have all heard this doctrine that you are eternally secure. Are you reflecting what that doctrine really teaches, or are people getting some wrong ideas about that doctrine because of your life? You are a member of the Lord's Church! What kind of a model are you?