



# LIVING TO DO

Believers should look for opportunities to do good works as acts of worship.

## TITUS 3:1-11

People who have been imprisoned for their faith remain faithful despite great costs. Christians with few economic resources give sacrificially to relieve believers fleeing their homes during religious persecution. Faithful laymen use their business opportunities to share Jesus with others. Believers around the world demonstrate their faith in difficult situations. As believers, we are responsible for walking like our Savior and doing good deeds for others.

***How might a believer's good works point others to Jesus? How can a believer communicate his or her motive for doing good works in a way that honors God?***

# UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

## TITUS 3:1-15

Understanding Paul's epistle to Titus requires reading it as a letter to a colleague, not just a theological treatise. The original form lacked the chapter and verse divisions that were added later for ease of reference. Sometimes these markers break up the natural thought patterns of a letter. Understanding Paul's intent requires Bible students to look at the way sentences and paragraphs should naturally follow each other.

The opening verses of chapter 3 refer back to the people addressed in chapter 2. Paul had given instructions about how Titus should teach various groups about character and conduct. As he moved toward the letter's conclusion, Paul summarized his comments and expanded them to describe how believers should live out their faith in a wide range of situations. From dealing with authorities to interactions with other people, they were to honor Christ.

Lest the Cretan Christians get the idea that Paul and Titus were speaking down to them, Paul interjected a personal confession. He emphasized how God had bestowed mercy and grace in their lives in spite of terrible sins. Just as the Lord had transformed them, He could work in and through the Cretan believers to demonstrate His transforming power.

Despite their best efforts, Paul and Titus would still encounter opponents outside and within the churches. Paul urged his son in the ministry to avoid useless debates and remain true to the message. People who believed the gospel should give themselves to live accordingly.

Titus' work was urgent because he had limited time to set the foundation on which other colleagues would build. When another pastor arrived from Paul, Titus would leave Crete to join Paul in Nicopolis where they would spend the winter. In the meantime, Titus' pastoral ministry required strengthening the disciples in their faith and in their walk with Christ.

***As you read Titus 3:1-11, list the actions Paul called on Titus to encourage. How is a believer's good behavior connected to the gospel message?***

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# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## GOOD DEEDS (TITUS 3:1-2)

**<sup>1</sup>Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, <sup>2</sup>to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.**

### VERSES 1-2

Christians in Crete needed to be reminded that godly behavior could influence unbelievers to embrace the gospel. Paul instructed Titus to remind them to ***be submissive to rulers and authorities***. Paul was not advocating blind allegiance that required believers to violate God's authority. He was encouraging believers to be respectful citizens living under the rules and regulations of Roman government. Obedience to those in authority is part of God's plan for order and peace. (See Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17.)

Paul hoped the believers serving in the churches at Crete could work to make life better for those who ruled and for those who lived under the rulers. By being ***ready for every good work*** they could have a wide opportunity to validate their faith in Christ through civic duty.

Titus needed to remind believers to demonstrate their salvation in four ways. First, they should not ***speak evil of*** anyone. While believers have a right to disagree with political policies, they are not to engage in verbal assassination and evil talk about those in authority. Second, they should ***avoid quarreling***. Believers have a responsibility to be peacemakers rather than brawlers. Third, they should ***be gentle***. Kindness opens doors of ministry that enable the gospel message to spread. Fourth, they should show ***perfect courtesy toward all people***. Gentleness is not weakness, but strength under the control of Christ. As believers showed the evidence of their transformation through Christ, they could build bridges conveying His grace toward all people.

***Why was it important for believers to submit to the authority of government? How does being a responsible citizen impact how others view Christians?***

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**BIBLE SKILL:** *Compare usage of the same word in different passages.*

Paul used the term or idea of heirs in several of his letters. In one column, write these references: Romans 8:14-17; Ephesians 1:11,18; 3:6; Galatians 3:29; 4:7; and Titus 3:7. In the second column, summarize how each passage describes believers as heirs of God. Also, consider the concept of inheritance in Galatians 3:18; Ephesians 1:11-14; and Colossians 1:12. What insights do you gain from each passage about being an heir? How would you summarize Paul's understanding of being an heir of God based on these passages?

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**BASED ON HIS MERCY** (TITUS 3:3-7)

<sup>3</sup> **For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.** <sup>4</sup> **But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,** <sup>5</sup> **he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,** <sup>6</sup> **whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,** <sup>7</sup> **so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.**

**VERSE 3**

The work of Christ in Paul was revealed by the transparent confession he made regarding his life prior to salvation. By using the pronoun **we**, Paul included himself and Titus. The word **were** indicates the contrast between a believer's degenerate past and a regenerate present life. As Paul pointed out the vices that characterized the life of an unbeliever, he was describing a broad sample rather than an exhaustive list.

He referred first to being **foolish** because a spiritually lost person does not comprehend God's plan or His truths. Second, unsaved persons are **disobedient** and **led astray** because they reject God's authority and allow themselves to be led astray by Satan. Next, unsaved individuals are characterized as **slaves to various passions and pleasures**. They are



enslaved to the lusts of their flesh and live in bondage to pleasures that cannot satisfy their deepest need. Fourth, they live in **malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another**. The portrait of a degenerate life is set in the frame of enmity and painted with the stains of ill will and restless discontent. Hatred was the full fruit of depravity that led to fractured relationships, murder, greed, racism, rejection of God's truth, and withholding love from others.

Paul's purpose in calling attention to the traits of degeneracy was two-fold. First, he wanted to stress the crucial need of Christlike behavior toward unsaved persons. Second, he wanted to emphasize that, as followers of Christ, we were once driven by the same sins that now disgust us. Therefore, it should humble us and remind us not to look upon unbelievers with scorn or contempt.

#### VERSES 4-5

There is a phenomenal difference between a life mired in depravity and a life made new by Christ. Paul wanted Titus to remind believers to live in the profound reality of God's gift of salvation—a salvation based on God's attributes and actions instead of our merit and actions. God's **goodness** and **loving kindness** was revealed in the incarnation of His Son as our Savior. His kindness united with His love was not merely an emotional posture but a redeeming action. Our human predicament was so hopeless that the only possible way to be saved was by a divine rescue orchestrated by **God our Savior**.

### Salvation is not a matter of what we *do*—it is a matter of what Jesus has *done*.

Paul clearly stated that the basis of salvation was revealed and accomplished by the work of Christ and **not because of works done by us**. Paul was emphasizing that salvation is not a matter of what we *do*—it is a matter of what Jesus has *done*. Good works are the result of salvation, not the cause of salvation. Consequently, Paul explained that believers are saved according to God's **mercy**. While mercy is similar to grace, it can be distinguished in this regard: Grace refers to God generously providing the forgiveness that we don't deserve, while mercy refers to God tenderly withholding the condemnation we do deserve.

Paul explained that salvation was a singular event described by several different terms. **Washing** was a metaphor to describe the

spiritual cleansing associated with salvation. While it can serve as a picture for baptism, it must not be assumed that baptism carries a saving function. A believer is not saved by the ordinance of baptism, but a believer is baptized as a testimony and a picture of the cleansing power of the Savior.

The term **regeneration** denoted life or rebirth that results from a saving relationship with Christ. Regeneration is a work imparted by Him to a believer that results in **renewal of the Holy Spirit**. All three persons of the Trinity are involved in salvation. The Holy Spirit indwells a believer at the moment of salvation and remains for the purpose of guiding, teaching, and empowering a believer to bear godly fruit, to share the gospel message, and to live victoriously over temptation.

#### VERSES 6-7

The Holy Spirit was not given partially to believers as if He was withholding Himself. Instead, the spirit was **poured out** lavishly as evidence that He is abundantly sufficient for every need in a believer's life. The Spirit that indwelt Paul and Titus is the same Spirit that indwells believers today.

The phrase **so that** in verse 7 indicates an objective reality regarding salvation and introduced the status of justification. Prior to salvation, all men and women are alienated from God and stand condemned. However, once an unbeliever trusts Jesus as Savior and relies on Him to forgive sin, God pronounces that person **justified**. On the basis of Jesus' atoning death, God pronounces a believer to be acquitted and free from condemnation.

Justification is a declaration that occurs **by his grace** so that believers are classified as righteous **heirs according to the hope of eternal life**. An *heir* referred to a legitimate member of a family who inherited a designated wealth. Believers are children in God's family who have received spiritual riches. As heirs, we experience the present benefits of His riches while anticipating the guaranteed fullness of eternity with Him.

***How would you describe the difference between doing good works to gain salvation and doing good works because one has been granted salvation?***

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## KEY DOCTRINE: *Justification*

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ (Rom. 3:23-25).

### DONE ON PURPOSE (TITUS 3:8-11)

**<sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. <sup>10</sup>As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, <sup>11</sup>knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.**

#### VERSE 8

The foundational truths of the gospel that Paul previously emphasized in verses 4-7 comprised another *trustworthy* saying. He wanted Titus to *insist* on those truths. The word *insist* carried the idea of strong reinforcement. Titus needed to firmly assure the believers about God's Word so that they *may be careful to devote themselves to good works*. Behaving the gospel is a reliable indicator of believing the gospel. Healthy doctrine is verified by holy living. Believers were expected to carefully devote themselves to doing good deeds that honored Christ. Paul explained that such activity was *excellent and profitable for people*. Godly service not only benefits others, it also blesses the ones doing it. Deeds of ministry to unbelievers as well as believers are not options that Paul left open. Instead, they are necessary activities of a disciplined and devoted follower of Christ. A life yielded to Christ will inevitably produce spiritual fruit that enriches a family, a church, and a community.

#### VERSE 9

To the extent that the believers at Crete could involve themselves in edifying ministries based on sound teaching, they could curb harmful discussions. Consequently, Paul reminded Titus to steer clear of several detrimental activities. First, Titus needed to *avoid foolish controversies*.

Rather than engage in a war of words, Titus could take the high road and refuse the bait of debate from false teachers. Paul was not instructing Titus to shun honest discussions about vital spiritual issues. He was pleading with him to keep away from silly and reckless disputes.

Second, Paul warned Titus about **genealogies**. Paul had in mind the spurious interpretations of genealogies provided by the false teachers. Third, Paul urged Titus to curtail **dissensions** because they stirred strife and divisiveness. Fourth, Titus needed to elude **quarrels about the law**. False teachers enjoyed controversies over trivialities in the Jewish law and took a measure of delight in minimizing the redeeming work of Christ in favor of a legalistic salvation.

***How might engaging with quarrels and controversies over trivialities get in the way of living out the gospel and honoring God through our works?***

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#### **VERSES 10-11**

Paul proposed to Titus a clear and simple procedure for dealing with a **person who stirs up division**. Divisiveness posed a serious threat to first-century churches just as it does to twenty-first century churches. The Greek word translated *stirs up division* is related to the words “heretical,” “heretic,” and “heresy.” A divisive person could hinder the mission of the church and tear apart the harmony among believers. The procedure for managing a divisive person involved a three-strikes-and-you-are-out approach. The divisive man or woman was to receive two warnings and then be rejected. Paul matched the severity of the problem with the severity of the solution. Condoning the divisive person’s activity could expose the churches to the wolves of heresy. Accordingly, the proper solution was to deny fellowship with such a person and to reject their teaching.

Fractious individuals who rejected godly correction and continued to spread enmity and strife proved themselves to be **warped**. Such a strong description was indicative of persons with a warped conscience who remained spiritually corrupt. Furthermore, they were **self-condemned** because their persistence in promoting untruths and their refusal to confess their sin amounted to a self-indictment of guilt.



# IN MY CONTEXT

- Believers demonstrate their faith through godly actions.
- Salvation offered through faith in Christ moves believers to good works.
- By avoiding useless debates, believers can concentrate on honoring God through doing good works.

***To what actions over the past week can you point that demonstrate your faith in Christ? How can you more clearly demonstrate your faith in Christ?***

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***Reflect on Titus 3:14 and the difference Christ has made in your life. How does your faith in Christ help you live a productive life? Memorize the verse.***

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***Discuss as a group ways of honoring God through addressing a need in your community. Identify steps the group can take to begin to address that need.***

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## Prayer Needs

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