SESSION 13
LIVING TO DO

TITUS 3:1-11

1 Remind them to submit to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, 2 to slander no one, to avoid fighting, and to be kind, always showing gentleness to all people. 3 For we too were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another. 4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, 5 he saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy—through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. 6 He poured out his Spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life. 8 This saying is trustworthy. I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed God might be careful to devote themselves to good works. These are good and profitable for everyone. 9 But avoid foolish debates, genealogies, quarrels, and disputes about the law, because they are unprofitable and worthless. 10 Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning. 11 For you know that such a person has gone astray and is sinning; he is self-condemned.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A “Believers” (NLT)
B “Respect the government” (The Message) and “its officers” (NLT)
C “Ready and willing” (AMP)
D “Say cruel things or argue” (CEV)
E “It wasn’t so long ago that we ourselves were stupid and stubborn” (The Message)
F “Evil” (CEV); “resentment” (TLB)
G God’s gracious resolve to have mercy on us
H “New birth (spiritual transformation)” (AMP); “rebirth” (NIV); “washing away our sins” (TLB)
I “Give” (CEV), similar to what He did at Pentecost (Acts 2:17,33)
J “Made free of the guilt of sin” (AMP); “made us acceptable to God” (CEV); “be put right with God” (GNT)—even though we didn’t deserve it
K Jesus’ parable in Mark 12 suggests the value of an heir. Paul wrote about believers as heirs (Rom. 4:13-17; Gal. 3:29-4:7). Other passages refer to our inheritance through Christ (Heb. 1:2; Jas. 2:5).
L “The Law of Moses” (CEV); Paul affirmed the purpose of the law (Rom. 7:12-14; Gal. 3:10-13). However, faith in Christ saves us, not loyalty to the law (Eph. 2:8-9).
M A wasted effort or “useless” (AMP, GNT)
N “Their own sins show how guilty they are” (CEV); “he cuts himself off” (The Message)

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1. **GOOD DEEDS** *(Titus 3:1-2)*

   - Paul directed Titus to remind the Cretan believers to be ready to do good works, placing others above themselves.

2. **BASED ON HIS MERCY** *(Titus 3:3-7)*

   - Paul outlined the contrast between the believer before and after conversion.
   - He emphasized that salvation isn’t based on works but on God’s mercy received through faith in Jesus.

3. **DONE ON PURPOSE** *(Titus 3:8-11)*

   - Paul explained that good works, not debates and arguments, should characterize the believer’s behavior.
   - The person who focuses on doing good works for God’s honor won’t have time to get involved in wasteful debates and arguments.

**SUMMARY STATEMENTS**

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

- 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.
FOCUS ATTENTION
When you think of good works at home, your church, or your community, what comes to mind?
• Many people think of volunteerism or service with a non-profit or community organization as an example of a good work.
• Some consider financial generosity as another way to support such organizations and an extension of or substitute for volunteerism.
• Our personal efforts to minister to others on our own and without the endorsement of an organization also serve as powerful examples of good works to our family and friends.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE
TITUS 3:1-2
How does Paul’s description of good works broaden the definition beyond our initial thoughts?
• A good work is something we should welcome and actively seek to perform whenever the opportunity comes our way.
• Good works put the needs of others above our own; they are often accomplished instead of self-care.
• By sandwiching a direction to engage in good works between obeying authorities, avoiding the kind of behavior that may harm others, and encouraging those that help them, Paul categorized good works as ways to deftly elevate faith through godly actions.

TITUS 3:3-7
Before we came to saving faith in Christ, what about our unregenerated selves would make good works next to impossible?
• Being consumed with the self-interest common to people in their natural, sinful states would leave little time for good works.
• Our lack of concern or care for others would diminish any desire to accomplish good works.
• If good works are the natural by-product of a life of faith, the by-product of a faithless life would be the opposite.

Why would Paul, after lauding good works, then take pains to diminish their importance?
• The understanding that we’re saved through grace, not works, is a basic tenet of Christianity and an important distinction from other religions.
• Jesus Christ’s atoning death on the cross and His resurrection accomplished the work of salvation, not our own efforts.
• Because Jesus prompts the good works we accomplish, the credit for them rightfully belongs to Him; He is the motivator.

TITUS 3:8-11
After first lauding then minimizing good works, Paul returned to recommending them. Why? What’s in it for the believer?
• Doing good works benefits the doer as well as the beneficiary by reinforcing a sense of purpose.
• Being focused and engaged in good works prevents us from wasting our time on other pointless or unprofitable activities.

How does a devotion to faithfully representing Christ through our works minimize being involved in dishonorable actions?
• In devoting ourselves to good works, we remove ourselves from the potential to be tripped up by sins.
• We also do others a favor when we respond to those who refuse to devote themselves to good works and end up stirring up trouble instead. We can first warn them and then reject their behaviors.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE
What place should good works have in a Christian’s life?
• God’s mercy to us should manifest itself in good works that benefit others.
• Being intentional about producing good works entails cultivating opportunities to show that “we love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).
• Good works manifest as deeds that we do to serve others.
• Serving others is a way to serve God. Whatever we do for the least we do for Him (Matt. 25:40).
• Being intentional in our good works means we’ll better share Christ’s love and protect ourselves from other activities that wouldn’t be spiritually profitable.

Personal Challenge: List Christ-honoring actions you have taken over the past week. Are you pleased with the list? While it’s important to spring into action when the opportunity for good works appear, being intentional or strategic may produce a harvest of good works. Plan the good works you’ll do in the week ahead. Don’t be overly ambitious; just look at the needs around you, and decide if there’s any way to help.
A GARDEN SPADE, GLOVES, A FLOWER POT, SOIL, AND SEEDS

Before the session gather garden tools to plant flower seeds, including a small spade, gloves, flower pot with soil, and seeds. During the session, don the gloves and show the group the rest of the gardening items. Hold up the packet of seeds and explain: These seeds represent the good works we do in life because once planted, they flower, creating beauty and refreshing those who see them.

As the group watches, add potting soil to the flower pot, dig in the soil, and plant the seeds. Say: We call them good works because they require effort. I hope you noticed the work I’ve already put into planting these flowers, and if we’re going to see a flowering plant, it’s not over. Note that Christians have to make the effort to gather the seeds of good works, dig in the dirt, plant the seeds, and may even become the ones responsible for tending the plants and making sure they have sunshine and water.

Conclude by identifying the kind of flower you just planted and when you expect the plant to grow and flower. Gift the plant to someone in the group or agree together who in the church the group would like to see take it home. Remind them that good works can be simple ones, like this modest gift, or may require much more time and effort, but they all take root in the mercy God has shown us and bloom in our care for others.

CLOTHED IN HUMILITY

Paul encouraged Titus to teach believers the value of doing good works so people could see Christ in them (Titus 3:1-2). In the process, he brought up the need for a sharp memory. Reasonably, the Christians in Crete could reach the point when they would grow tired of doing what’s good. When people persecuted them, misunderstood their efforts, or ignored what they were doing, they could find themselves wanting to give up on doing anything that would point people to Christ. Therefore, they would be able to keep on doing things that would be good only if they remembered well. Remembering how God loved them enough to save them through Christ would keep them on task. He saved them because of His love, not because of anything they did to earn their salvation (v. 3-7).

Remembering would enable them to get off their high horses of selfish pride and press on with humble service. An awareness of humility reinforces the value of remembering that Christ saved us, and we didn’t save ourselves. In an article about being humble that appeared in a recent issue of Biblical Illustrator, attention was given to the biblical framework for understanding humility. In the days of the Old Testament, humility emerged from poverty. Poor people practiced humility when they came into the presence of individuals who were wealthy. They bowed in humble submission in the awareness that they had nothing. Accordingly, kings expected subjects in their kingdoms to bow before them in humility. Refusing to express humility in the presence of the king was a sure sign of disrespect and perhaps even rebellion.

The picture of humility painted in the Bible helped God’s people to approach Him with submissive, willing hearts. He helped them to see that He resisted people filled with selfish pride. However, He was gracious to a person saturated with sincere humility (Prov. 3:34). In the New Testament, church leaders brought up the need for believers to practice humility in their walks with the Lord (Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5). Jesus serves as our stellar model of humility (Phil. 2:5-8).

Remembering that we’re saved because of what Christ did for us helps us remain humble. That kind of humility enables us to keep on serving Him by doing whatever is good for His glory.