

**Restored & Devoted: *The focus of a gospel life***  
*Titus 3:8-15*

**Introduction:** Some people have an eye for and skill in the restoration process. Some people can see a broken down piece of junk and through time and expertise, can restore it to its past luster. Others can see a broken down building or home, and have the vision to transform what was once falling apart and worthless into something that is beautiful and useful again.

In the same way, this is what the gospel does in our lives. He takes us in a hopeless state where we had nothing to live for except a world that is dying and passing, had no way to fix this state on our own, and were simply waiting to experience judgment that was stored up for us. God transformed our lives through the work of His Son because of His kindness, love, and mercy, and because of grace, He saved us. This was all planned before the foundation of the world. But just as a restored care is now useful and is to be driven (not returned to the junkyard) and a restored house is to be lived in, our salvation has been given to us so that we will now **live** it out to the glory of God. It is this blending of salvation which produces good works, of proper understanding producing proper living that Paul drilled into Titus and desired Titus to drill into the church. This is what makes Christianity unique to the world: that works do not save, but works are by nature produced by the salvation that God brings to His people. This is the antidote to a life of **stagnancy and apathy** which plagues the modern church, and has marked our young people who are effected by the relentless lies of our culture.

**Review of the book of Titus:**

Titus was written to a group of believers on the island of Crete that faced a wicked culture around them (*"Cretans are always liars, evil beasts and lazy gluttons"*) and inside the church where insubordinate, deceptive and rebellious people had caused things to be out of control and out of order. The gospel of Jesus brings order to our broken hearts and the church is to bring order to our disheveled lives and homes. Here is how that theme played out in the whole of the book:

**1:5-9** – Titus was to appoint elders, qualified men, who would be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and rebuke those who contradict

**1:10-16** – The church at Crete (much like the church at Ephesus) had many who were leading people astray and were betrayed by their works. They needed to be **rebuked/silenced** and taught to walk soundly in the faith. **NOTE:** There was a distinct difference in interacting with insubordinate people **INSIDE the church** ("must be silenced") and those **OUTSIDE the church** ("gentle", "avoid quarrelling", "submit and obey")

**2:1-8** – This all stood in contrast to what gospel transformed lives looked like: because of sound doctrine, the church was to function with proper relationships – older believers who were able and willing to be models and invest in the young, teaching not only to know but to also do what was good and right

**2:9-3:2** – The church was also to stand in contrast to the world with how they interacted in the workforce and in the political realm, **showing submission** in each case **because the grace of God** and a transformed life demanded it, and the fact that this **grace was for all people**

**3:3-7** – Paul then reminded the church of their former state and condition, and the fact that God saved them, by His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of His Spirit to become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

### Principles of the book:

- Right Biblical thinking should activate right living – (wrong thinking will lead to wrong living, and thinking that leads to wrong living is not right) – We need MORE Bible, not less
- There is no separation of **salvation** and **discipleship** (*learning, obeying, reproducing*) – one inherently leads to the other
- There will always be roadblocks set up that potentially hinder this process (false teachers, oppressive masters, oppressive government, deceptions, etc.) that must be overcome through the commitment to truth and relationship. **Submission and good works are not secondary issues for a follower of Jesus Christ, but a necessary outflow of restoration**

### Proposition:

As Paul concludes his letter, he gives encouragement for gospel driven living in the world by engaging in the good deeds brought about by gospel change, by both affirming what is profitable and avoiding what is unprofitable.

### I. Gospel driven living is achieved by continual affirmation of profitable things (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.*

Paul transitions to his closing statement to Titus by using a favorite saying “the saying is trustworthy” (1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11), which calls attention to the importance of the previous section, in this case it is verses 3-7 and the clear explanation of the gospel contained there. He then emboldens Titus to continue doing what he had set out to do. It was Paul’s desire that Titus would “**insist on, speak confidently to, and give special emphasis to**” this main teaching. There was no indication that Titus has shied away from this in the past, but his mission was to continue to teach the same thing with boldness, clarity, and urgency. The reason he was to do this was given by Paul (shown in his purpose statement begun by a “*hina*” clause, which is translated “so that”). By insisting on these things, **two areas would be affirmed:**

#### A. Affirm the proper order of the gospel

The emphasis in the book has been on the production of good works in the life of a believer (2:7, 14; 3:1, 3:8, 14), but in his explanation of the gospel, Paul is clear to show that it was in NO WAY, shape, or form that it was our works done in righteousness that caused God to save us. In other words, the point of the gospel is that God saved us because of His own free will and love, upholding His own purposes and character. However, those who have believed in God have been given the ability and responsibility to live and act differently in the world. The point is, works can never save, but true salvation will always produce works.

*“There is a problem when the inflow of spiritual renewal does not replenish the outflow of spiritual ministry.” Donald Whitney*

Our spiritual reality and growth is like that of a **sponge plunged in water**. Knowledge fills it up, and when it is squeezed out it is capable of absorbing more. Simply learning more without acting on it is like a water logged sponge that simply sinks to the bottom of the sink.

### B. Affirm the proper outcome for those who believe the gospel

*Paul was keenly aware that life happens, and apathy or stagnancy are possible temptations.* The gospel is the power of God in Christ to change, but it frees us up to **work, not to earn but to please!** Paul is aware that often we get **distracted**, often we get in a position of living **reactively** instead of **proactively**. Sometimes this happens because we live for **no greater purpose** than getting through the day, or by simply doing what we **want** to do. Others of us have made choices in our past that now make our decisions in the present. Still others of us have never really come to grips with the power and pleasure of our full salvation, and have never thought through what could be in life.

The call here is to **engage our mind** in the process of good works. The word that Paul uses means to *“concentrate on, be concerned about, and be intent to do”*. Before we can engage in the deeds themselves, we must engage the **faculty of our mind**. Every believer has been given a life to live in the context of **time**. We know that even our time must be made the most of, since the days are evil (Eph. 5:15-16). A believer, then, must think hard when it comes to good works, how he engages himself, where he engages, and seeks profit in those engagements. These “good works” most often will align with our *gifting, abilities, willingness, and opportunities, and will center around RELATIONSHIPS with others*. If we are engaged in true relationships (believers AND unbelievers), we will never be in want of opportunities for good works. It is clear that unbelievers CANNOT do these kinds of good works since they are not driven by the gospel or Spirit (see Titus 1:16)

Paul also uses a word that means to **“devote oneself, engage, and stand in front of”** after having thought about good works. The picture is of a **shopkeeper** in front of a store trying to sell his goods. I experienced this in while shopping in the Old City of Jerusalem with a shop keeper named Shaban. He would stand in front of his store and show the goods within, engaging the passerby in order to share the goods. This is the type of **intensity** Paul calls believers to in devoting themselves to good works.

Paul then defines what good works are by saying that the engagement is in things that are **useful and profitable**. In other words, knowing that life has a limited amount of time, knowing that the gospel is precious, and knowing that we have been given great opportunity and responsibility, we engage in things that **matter**. **Galatians 6:9-10** says, “And let us not grow weary of doing **good**, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”<sup>10</sup> So then, as we have opportunity, let us do **good** to **everyone**, and *especially to those who are of the household of faith.* We are to seek the highest good for others, both in and out of the church. We should engage in things that **profit people with and for the gospel**. In doing this, we create a reputation for ourselves in the world that the church loves its own, as well as everyone else and demonstrates this in tangible ways. These works are also **varied**, since the Bible does not define exactly what these good works are. Much like Paul told the church at Thessalonica that they were God-taught to love (1 Thess. 4:9), we know what good works are because God has planned them out for us before the foundation of the world.

Jeremiah the prophet had this to say as encouragement for Israel as they sojourned in Babylon for 70 years, as aliens and strangers in the land:

4 “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7 **But seek the welfare of the city** where I have sent you into exile, and **pray to the Lord on its behalf**, for in its welfare you will find your welfare

Good works for the city, but not devoid of a spiritual purpose in prayer. This is how we stay away from a social gospel disconnected from the mission of transformation and restoration.

In sum, the call was for Titus to continually call believers to engage in the things that mattered most, and to work hard at doing it, knowing it's what their salvation demanded. There are two areas that I come back to when thinking about investment of time, energy, and work, and they are two things that are eternal: **God's Word & people**. In thinking through where we spend our life's venture, those two things have to be at the forefront, because those two things are **useful and profitable**. This provides a basis of evaluation for the use of our time in this present world.

## II. Gospel driven living is achieved by the avoidance of unprofitable things (9-11)

Paul was also aware that in order to live the lives that God calls us to live, there are certain areas we must not get entangled into. There are so many distractions in life, so many things that can get us off topic and out of focus, and we must discern what they are so that we do not engross ourselves in areas that do not profit others, the gospel, or ourselves. There were two areas in particular that Paul addresses that seem to be potential issues in every church: **dissenting discussions** and **dissenting people**. **Titus was to shun**, ‘to turn oneself around, to purposely turn away from something or someone.’

### A. Avoid certain discussions

**1. Foolish Questions** – This term questions literally means “the processes of inquiry” and had at its core usage a way of debating. They were defined as foolish because they were utterly impractical and consumed time and energy which should have been used for other more profitable things. These were discussions that were brought up that did not have the goal of edification as the end result, but were brought up to **debate**, to **wrangle over words**, and to simply engage in the process of argumentation.

**2. Foolish Genealogies** – There seemed to be a contingent of people in the church at Crete with Jewish backgrounds (Titus 1:10), and one of the types of discussions that would be raised would be to talk about genealogies of the Old Testament. This was also seen as a problem at Ephesus in Eph. 1:4. What the discussion would turn into was a taking the lists and reading in allegorical interpretations and fanciful meanings from the OT. They would try to make these say more than they were intended to say, and thus the people became the end all, not Scripture alone.

**3. Arguments** – These types of discussions would inevitably lead to arguments, strife, and rivalry. They would be contention over interpretations and even the way that discussions would take place. There is an obvious progression of thought here with Paul, as one leads to another.

**4. Fighting about the law** – Again, this was an attempt to make the Mosaic law say more or less than it was intended to. There were those of the Circumcision party that would add regulations onto believers, fighting for the fact that a believer needs to keep all of the OT law to be saved or be righteous. These arguments were settled in Acts 15 by the Jerusalem council, but the discussions continued to rage.

We can see the same type of discussions today. Sometimes people want to discuss areas of theology or life simply to **show how smart they are** or to **stay away from the personal and thus most important areas of life**. Titus was to avoid these types of arenas because they were inherently **unprofitable and worthless**. This meant that he did not engage with everyone who wanted to mix it up with him, because some people simply wanted to **argue, not to grow**. Titus had to keep in mind certain principles when evaluating these discussions:

- These questions and **arguments invariably began with error** or mere opinion and not the Truth. Titus had to discern whether this was a Biblical discussion or simply one that originated and puffed up an opinion of man
- *Is this discussion going to edify the people involved* (Eph. 4:29; 1 Cor. 14:26)? In other words, does this build up and encourage those involved to love God and others more, to humble us, and to produce good works? What is the goal? To win? To feel smarter than someone?
- Is it done out of love? 1 Timothy 1:5 says “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith:”, and that was in the context of dealing with those engaged in vain discussions. Is the goal and aim love, or selfish pride?
- Jesus and Paul showed us the way in **Luke 13 and Acts 17**, turning potential political arguments (the heinous act of Pilate killing Galileans and desecrating a sacrifice and Paul debating the philosophers of the day) into a call to **repentance and focus on the resurrection of Jesus**.

#### **B. Avoid certain people (10)**

This is by far the tougher area to deal with in terms of avoidance, but it was absolutely necessary for the gospel to go forward. There were times when Titus had to **firmly yet reluctantly** avoid certain people.

**The Person** – The word for “factious” or “one who stirs up division” is the word that is derived from the English word “heretic”. The original word simply meant “to choose”, but eventually the term came to signify the *placing of self-willed opinions above the truth, refusing even to consider the views contrary to one’s own*. There were clearly those that were teaching bad theology in the church at Crete (1:10-13), but this person may have been teaching information or material that was not *necessarily* wrong, but was unsubmitive and self-willed in the way he went about it. He was a law to himself. He was a separatist who was **warped and sinful** in his motives, attitudes, and actions. This was one who continually pressed the unfruitful debate.

**The Process** – The Biblical process of restoration always deals with a **warning or admonition** to change (Matthew 18; Galatians 6:1-5) and an **opportunity** to change. Here, Titus was instructed to warn this person **once and then twice**, to call him back to unity, submission, and profit. When these warnings were not headed, Titus was to have nothing else to do with him. This is a unique form and process of discipline in the church, but it matched the person and the need. This person was so warped and sinful, and was so divisive, that bringing him before the church would be counter-productive to the process, since it would feed his ability to argue and be divisive. Instead he was to be given no more platform, no more opportunity to teach things and ways that were contrary to Scripture. In fact, this man would be

shown to be **self-condemned**. This is much like letting an employee go after he fails to show up to work. He is **self-terminated** more than fired, since he has made a clear decision on his own.

**The Purpose** – In **Romans 16:16-17**, Paul wrote *“I appeal to you, brothers, to **watch out** for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; **avoid them**.<sup>18</sup> For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.”*

The issue for Titus was that there were people operating on their own agenda, they had to be confronted, and when they did not change, they were to be avoided, shunned, and given no more platform, since they were going contrary to what the church was called to do. **Unity in truth and fellowship is imperative for effectively reaching the world with the gospel**

### III. Gospel driven living is achieved by learning to do the fruitful things (12-15)

Paul concludes his letter to Titus in similar ways that he wrote his other letters, with personal greetings and encouragements.

**A. By helping Paul** – Paul informs Titus that he desired to send either Artemas or Tychichus (Acts 20:4, Col. 4:7; Eph. 6:21) to relieve Titus so Titus can travel to be with Paul in Nicopolis. Nicopolis was probably on the west coast of Achaia, which was in the Southern province of Greece. Titus could be a living example to the church by being a good work in the life of Paul, both in Crete and by moving to help the needs of Paul.

**B. By helping gospel laborers** – We know little of Zenas the lawyer, but have quite a bit of information on Apollos (Acts 18:24-25; 1 Cor. 1:11-12, 16:12), but Paul’s point was that these gospel laborers were passing through, and the church should do all they could to help those worked for the advancement of the gospel.

**C. By helping those with urgent needs** – The church was called to learn and discover how to engage in deeds that met the pressing needs of others, so that they would not be unfruitful with their time. This was a summation of the point and argument of this letter, that the church may be so engaged in deeds that were profitable, that they were willing to engage in any and every way so that the gospel would be magnified and seen by those around.

### Conclusion:

The gospel restores us in all ways, moving us from **apathy to passion, from distraction to focus, from passive stagnancy to strategic devotion**. We are freed up to diligently engage in good works, to spend our effort in what is profitable and worthwhile, and to stop needless discussions and division. Restoration is a gift that moves us unable to produce good works to having the privilege to do so. This all sets the stage for what we will look at in the next few weeks, which will be the clarion call to complete discipleship.