

Devoted to Good Works

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[0:00] Well, let's turn in the scriptures to Titus chapter 3 tonight. Titus chapter 3. The Lord has exalted above all things his name and his word.

! And so we turn to his exalted word as it's found in Titus 3. And I'm going to read the first eight verses. Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.

At one time, we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs, having the hope of eternal life.

This is a trustworthy saying. And I want to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.

[1:41] These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. Amen. Brother Roger Cryan will come and minister the word to us.

Thank you, Pastor John. I want to enlist your participation as I get started tonight, and I hope it's as quick as that response Pastor got this morning from that little person, whoever it was, that when Pastor asked if God is, if you can see God, somebody said, no, you can't.

And she was quick with that answer, which was great. Whoever it was was really listening right there. So I hope you can do the same with me as I get started tonight, because what I want to do is give you a common theme or element in some different relationships.

And as I do that, there's going to be, like I said, a common theme flowing through each one of these. And in the case that I'm giving you tonight, it really could be summed up in one word.

So I'm not looking for a big paragraph or anything like that. It's going to take 10 minutes or something like that. One word will do. So let me read off some relationships that I have here.

[2:59] An alumnus and his alma mater, a dog to his master, a husband to his wife, a wife to her husband, a mama bear to her cubs, a cub fan to the Cubs team.

What's the common theme? Loyalty. All right. Yeah. That's any other word that would be similar to that? Obedient. Obedient.

Well, that's not quite the word I'm looking for. Devotion. Devotion. Yeah. There's the word. Loyalty and devotion. So as we mention that and think of that word, what would be some of the elements that would be included in that whole matter of devotion?

A leader and a follower. Respect. Concern. Commitment. Commitment.

These are all good answers. Perseverance. We heard about that this morning. Certainly one who is devoted to something perseveres. And so we have these different elements.

[4:12] So from what you've said and what I've spent some time thinking about, we could say or we recognize that devotion is not some casual, intermittent pursuit or attachment to something.

But rather, it consists of a strong inner attachment to, a commitment to love, something that produces a behavior, words and actions that properly reveal that inner attachment.

Carol says, I'm always too wordy. A lot of run-on sentences. And she's right. But let me say that again. It consists of a strong inner attachment to commitment, attachment to, a commitment to, a love for, something that produces behavior, behavior that properly reveal that inner attachment and commitment and love.

That strong love for something that produces those kind of actions that reveal, I'm committed to this. I have a strong attachment to, a strong affection for whatever that is.

Now let's look at Titus 3.8. Because that's the verse I want us to focus on tonight. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to, and here we go, devote themselves to doing what is good.

[5:44] These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. So the basic call to action I want you to have on your mind when you leave tonight is this.

We must be careful to devote ourselves to doing what is good. And this was one of my memory verses. And after Pastor John asked me to speak, fill in for Pastor Jason, I was going through some of my memory verses.

And this is one that stood out to me. And as it is with me, it is with you at times. There's something about a verse that you've gone over numerous times, and all of a sudden it just stands out to you. And there's a new challenge there. And so this has been something that's been on my mind and a challenge to me. So I thought, well, if it's a challenge to me, it's got to be a challenge to somebody else out there tonight.

And so I want to present some of these truths to you in regard to being devoted and devoting ourselves, carefully devoting ourselves to doing what is good.

[6:44] Now, what I want us to do, or what I want to do, is break this down, so that you can leave with not just this phrase that we might think, oh, that's a good phrase, but one that is motivated by truth.

And as a result, you are compelled to go out there and carefully devote yourselves, even more this week, to doing what is good.

And so we have to start out and consider, well, who are the ones that are to carefully devote themselves to doing what is good?

And we see that answered in our verse, verse eight. It is us. He says in verse eight, this is a trustworthy saying, and I want you to stress these things so that those who have trusted in God, there were those among the population of Crete who had heard the gospel, and they had believed it.

They believed God. I like that translation of this phrase. It can be translated, it is translated in the NIV, those who have trusted in God.

[7:57] But even a better translation is, those who have believed God. I think it just offers a more personal dimension to what has happened in the lives of these people. Someone had brought the gospel to them, and there's even some uncertainty of when that was, when that occurred first.

It may have been that some of the population of Crete were in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost. They heard the gospel there, and then they took it back to the Isle of Crete.

Of course, the apostle Paul came at some time later, presented the gospel as well, and so they heard it there again. So at some point, they heard the gospel, and they believed God, and now these people were distinct from the rest of the population.

They had a new identity in Christ, and as such, they were called to a brand new activity. They now were going to be set apart in some way, and in particular, this way we're talking about tonight. They were going to be set apart from the rest of the population there on that Isle of Crete. And this was a challenge to them.

[9:10] Look at what the population was like. The temptation for them that necessitated this exhortation was that quite possibly they would revert back to the kind of behavior that they were saved out of, and that was not to be.

With this new identity in Christ, they were going to live brand new lives, and were going to now devote themselves to doing what was good and not revert back to what they were previously.

Because see, look at the exhortation or the reminder in chapter 2, verses 11 and 12. He says, For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

It teaches us to say no to ungodliness or worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age.

And chapter 1, verse 12, describes a little bit more of what that culture was like, even from one who was one of their own prophets.

[10:23] Even one of their own prophets has said, Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons. So the culture in which they were living was certainly an ungodly culture, and so the

apostle Paul, God, did not want them to revert back to that.

They were supposed to be distinct in the culture, not removing themselves from the culture, certainly. And we're seeing that in the verse that we're taking a look here, look at here.

But they were called to be distinct people. And so it's those believers, and we, while living in the world that we live in today, are called to devote ourselves to doing what is good.

And it's something I think that we need to understand as something that I am personally responsible for. Now we're going to take a look later on at what might hinder us from actually being careful to devote ourselves to doing what is good.

But let's just take note of this, because he's telling Titus that those who have trusted in God are the ones who are called to this activity.

[11 : 35] So are you one of those people who have believed God, who have trusted in God? Then this is for you. This is something that you must take personal responsibility for as you proceed from here tonight going into the week.

And it's something that you will carry in your minds throughout the week, and therefore live out during the week, because it is your personal responsibility as one who has believed God.

And also in the verse, he gives us a motivation that will help us to do that, but we'll look at that in a little bit. So we are the ones that are called to this activity. So now what are we called to?

We are called to be careful to devote ourselves to doing what is good. Now if I repeat that enough tonight, certainly you will leave with that on your minds.

But again, I hope that from the rest of what I share tonight, you'll be motivated by much more than my repetition of saying it. Doing what is good.

[12 : 40] Let's break this down. God's calling them and us to actions that stand in contrast to the selfish lifestyle that takes no consideration for the glory of God and the welfare of others.

The one who is trusted in God and believe God is to devote himself to all kinds of actions of practical godliness and goodness.

I'm still out there in the broad realm of what this actually means, and we'll get down to some more specifics, but I'm trying to whittle that down for you. It means doing good for others in both public and private settings.

Doing actions that are for the good and the benefit of, now we can get more specific, family, church, in your neighborhood, your community, your school.

Since those of us who have believed God enter into all of these spheres of life, all of these environments. We travel in those kind of environments.

[13 : 41] So this exhortation is not just presented here, but throughout the scriptures in different places. You don't have to turn to these passages, but let me read some. Again, just the broad perspective of what we're called to as Christians.

Matthew 5.16, In the same way, let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Galatians 6.19, Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people.

Again, that broad category. Let's do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. 1 Peter 2.11 and 12, some of my favorite verses, if you can have favorite verses.

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, there they are, we see that difference again. Dear friends, those who are believers, living as aliens, strangers in the world, the culture in which they were living, he encouraged them to abstain from sinful desires which war against your soul, live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Another one, 1 Peter 4.19, So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves. Sounds like our word devotion. should commit themselves to their faithful creator and continue, don't stop, but get started out of this new identity that you have in Christ Jesus with this faithful creator that you call your own.

[15 : 24] Be committed to and be faithful and continue in doing what is good. Now, what that good looks like is going to be different in different situations.

and that's why he calls them to be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. Think about, let's break that, those words down there.

Careful means to consider, to think about, to plan, and to prepare how you're going to devote yourselves to doing what is good.

So again, it's not just something you don't think about, you actually do. You take careful consideration about how you're going to be obedient to this exhortation that comes from the one you believe in, God himself.

It's not something that we don't take time to put plans to. Let's say, what's this going to actually look like in school?

[16:30] What's this actually going to look like in my family? Or when I go to work, what is it going to look like? So it's something that we spend time thinking about and considering and making plans and then prepare to follow through with that.

So carefully devote, to give yourself, or it means to excel, to give yourself consistently to doing good works or that which contributes to the well-being of others, again, in the sphere in which God has allowed you to move and travel throughout the week, again, your family.

So break it down even a little bit more. All right? I'm a husband that believes in God. I have believed God. Therefore, I need to be one that carefully considers how I can do good this week as a husband in my home to my wife.

What will that look like? It's got to get beyond just that general principle to something very specific. And that's going to take some thought and some consideration on my part because my wife is different than somebody else's wife.

Me doing good to her is going to look different than somebody doing good to somebody else's wife. And so I'm going to think about that carefully. And as I evaluate that from knowing my wife and dwelling with her according to knowledge, I'm going to then commit myself by the grace of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, to actually do that, to carry out, to persevere in that throughout this week.

[18:17] And she is a Christian wife one who believes God is going to do the same because God has given her specific responsibilities, privileged responsibilities to carry out as a wife that involves some submission, that involves being a helper too.

So how can I be careful to do what is good this week as a faithful helper to Roger? that's going to take some thought because she's busy too in her life.

And I am as well. You know, so you're getting the idea. Children, there are many of you that believe in God. And so you have to consider as well and take time to think through.

Well, we know God says children are to obey your parents, children are to honor your parents. So now you've got to think more specifically than that. If I'm going to be one who is committing myself to carefully devote myself to doing what is good, what should that look like now this week?

For me as a child to my parents, saved or not, how can I seek to do what is good to them? At work. What's needed at work?

[19:34] I mean, this is where we have breakout groups and you all go out and talk about these different things. What does this look like specifically? If I'm called to do this and to persevere in this, what actually is it going to look like?

And on and on we could go, which would make for an interesting conversation. But that's something you can do as you go home. Talk to each other about that.

Carry it on beyond this time that we have together here so you can spur one another on to love and to good works. so we carefully devote ourselves.

And as I've read that verse, I found it interesting, of course, the use of the word in the NIV, to carefully devote yourself, to carefully think about it, to make plans.

You know, I was thinking about that and wondering, well, that exhortation is there for a reason, challenging them, listen folks, you need to be careful that you're doing these things.

[20:43] That means that there was a possibility that they might not do these things. I mean, these exhortations aren't in there just to fill up space. They're there for a reason.

And so I started to think about, well, why would we need such an exhortation as this? Why would I have to be exhorted to be careful to do what is good?

Of course, we should do what's good. But do we? Do we always pursue it with great diligence and perseverance so that we are the ones excelling in it?

That's the idea of that word of devotion. It's almost the idea of taking the lead in doing what's good. Well, I can't say that I've taken the lead.

I did something good last week for somebody. Well, that's good, but it's not what we're talking about here. That's not what really sets us apart as people who believe God.

[21:45] And so I had to think about this, and this is something that I've been thinking about the past few months anyway since I've, and I don't like the word retire because people get all kinds of visions of what that means, and sitting on the recliner or laying in the beach or whatever.

We do have a beach at our house in the pond, but I don't set the recliner up out there. But when we think about, it's been something that's been on my mind.

How does God want me to use my time on a regular basis? And in this case, the general principle is that I need to be careful that I've devoted myself or am devoting myself to doing what is good in both my public and private life?

And so then I'm thinking, well, what keeps me from that? And this is where the breakout groups would be good again. What keeps us from that kind of devotion?

Devotion. Well, we've got some time. I already had you interacting, so interact with me again on this. Why the necessity of that? What is it quite possibly that would keep one who believes God from carefully devoting himself to doing what is good in both public and private life?

[23:09] Distractions. Those of you that attended CTA learned about some of what those distractions are. There are distractions, but let's even get more specific as to what quite possibly could be some of those distractions.

Media. Media in what way? TV, internet. Okay. All right. All right. The distractions certainly. The busyness of life could be one of those distractions.

I just don't have time. How am I expected to do all that I'm responsible for and now you want me to do what's good? Well, hopefully it's intermixed in there and we have that kind of perspective that we haven't divided life up into so many categories that doing good is unrelated to what I'm doing at work or in school or in my home or wherever else.

Whatever, what else? Roger? Yeah, so it's kind of that entitlement attitude of, you know, I'm just too tired.

I've done my share today and I've actually done it for my wife and now it's my turn to sit back and relax.

[24:36] Why should I have to sacrifice more when I'm so tired? I've given so much already. Wow, we can be thankful and rejoice that Jesus didn't say that on the way to the cross.

Yeah, that could be one of those things that we would need to be careful of. So part of that careful consideration is some of this evaluation that's going on in our minds.

I wonder why I don't really want to do that. And instead would prefer going this direction, other thoughts that you might have? Health issues?

All right. Some of that, we could have health issues. The older I get and wake up in the morning, I feel some of those health issues in my bones, in my aches.

And you think, man, oh man, you know, what's going on? And you would think, well that kind of entitles me to have somebody serve me, obviously. And there certainly will be things that I won't be able to do at 63 that I did earlier, but does that deliver me from this exhortation?

[25:53] I don't see that worked out in the passage. Now, I may have to get creative in my careful planning of how now I can do those good works because of some limitations I have, but it doesn't excuse me from doing the good works.

But some of those issues can really take hold of our hearts, and before you know it, we aren't being the ones who are devoting ourselves carefully to doing what is good.

I'm sure you've got many more. Here's one that may have been happening here among these people, and maybe with us too.

We may tend to pride and maybe remove ourselves from unsafe people. They don't deserve what I can do.

They don't even appreciate. Look at how ungodly they are. These cretins and ungodly people. They even describe them at, look at the end of verse chapter 1.

[27:02] They're detestable, disobedient, and unfit for doing anything good. So why should I do anything good to them? Now, if we're not careful, it's that kind of thinking that could rule in our hearts.

But call, Paul, God, through Paul encourages Titus, you need to stress these things so that these people that believe in God would be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.

Well, there's many others. Let somebody else do it. I've done my share all my life. Let somebody else do it. Or I'm just a kid. What can you expect from me as a kid to do in school?

There's only so few of us. It doesn't say, it just says, those that believe in God. If you're a teenager, you believe in God. Younger than teenager, you believe in God.

God calls you to this. So you need to take careful consideration. How would I do this toward my sibling? They don't deserve that. Well, they may not, but God doesn't call you to do good to those that deserve it.

[28:14] He just calls you to be careful to devote yourself to doing what is good. So it's something we have to be careful that we are doing. Let's take a look at the motivation for this because we do need motivation for doing what is good.

So look at what Paul tells Titus here. At the beginning of the verse, it says, this is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things so that there's that connection, there's a direct correlation between our being careful to devote ourselves to doing what is good and this trustworthy saying and these things that Titus was to stress.

And to stress means to strenuously, zealously, continually assert, to affirm strongly, to press them on the attention of the hearers, to dwell upon them.

that's what he was supposed to do with these things. And so we can already see that this is a matter of great significance and importance that he was supposed to do because it does directly relate to us doing what we're supposed to do.

And so Paul, God through Paul, doesn't want Titus to miss this. You need to stress these things.

You need to commit yourself to faithfully affirm these things and bring them to the remembrance of the people because these things are going to have a great influence on how they live in the world.

[29:50] In fact, it will motivate them to do what is good. I would say we need to know what that is. And I need that if I'm going to follow through with doing what is good.

So what is that great truth or what are those great truths that Titus was to stress, to press upon their minds so that they will have that effect and will be motivated to carefully devote ourselves to doing what is good.

Well, these things, I think it could be summed up in saying the gospel for that's what I think those things or these things it's pointing back to.

In verses 3-7 and even chapter 2 11-15 we see the gospel connection here with our devotion and eagerness to doing what is good.

So let me read those verses, Titus 2 11-15 and you'll see what I mean. And then chapter 3 we'll start there. For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

[31:07] it teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions. Think of those worldly passions again as many of those things that we listed, those passions that move us to just think of ourselves and nothing else.

And therefore my whole life is centered around what can I do in order to get what will bring me most benefit and pleasure. That's a worldly passion that should have no part of our lives as believers.

I mean, the grace of God has appeared to us and it teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and what? To live self-controlled upright and godly lives in this present age while we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own eager to do what is good.

I mean, even just in that passage you see the gospel there and the focus, the emphasis that that is supposed to have so that it works within us so that we are now thinking, wait a minute, I'm saved from this kind of life over here and now I'm saved unto something as well.

I'm to be a person who is eager not to seek my own self-indulgence but one who is eager to do what is good. Chapter 3, remind the people.

[32:47] I need that reminder, that's why we're doing this passage tonight, I needed the reminder. Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities. He's given us some of those specifics of what that good looks like.

To be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good. There's some of that readiness. How do you get ready? How does a team get ready? There's a strategy that they go through.

They think about it. The coach thinks about it. They each know what they're going to do in certain situations and then when they're ready for the situation, the situation presents itself, they're ready to do what is good.

They've gone through all this presentation because they are eager to do what is good at those times. And so now they need to be ready. We need to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceful and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.

At one time, now here we go, at one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures.

[33:57] We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. What a picture that presents. Isn't that the gospel? Isn't that part of the gospel and what we understand and what we had to understand about ourselves?

This is who I was in the past. I'm tempted to think of these people, these cretins out here. Don't go down that road because you too once were foolish, disobedient.

I was right there with them. And I need to remember that. I need to have that in my mind when I'm tempted to remove myself to such a degree that I do no good for those who are still outside the body of Christ, then I have forgotten something about what I used to be and what God brought me out of.

And I should never forget that. But then there's the other side of God's oneness, grace, and mercy. Verse 4, but when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of our righteous things we had done, he's putting it in the right perspective.

I want you to be doing good deeds, but you always remember you didn't get where you are because of those good deeds you're doing now. he saved us not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.

[35:24] He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs, having the hope of eternal life.

This is a trustworthy saying, and I want you to stress these things. You see how it just flows right into that. And you begin seeing that correlation more and more between the gospel, remembering the gospel, what we were, and how God's grace came to us so generously.

And now because of that grace, what we can do. It's a trustworthy saying. Paul is telling Titus to stress these things, to work them into the very various elements even of public worship, so that your people don't forget.

But then I think personally, for each of us, we need to draw them to our remembrance, so that from this meditation we think, we plan, and then we devote ourselves to actions of what?

Grace and mercy. Wasn't that what God was doing toward us? Did not God act in generous ways toward us when we were still outside of Christ?

[36:53] Generous ways. Did he do something good for me? He did something fantastic for me when I was undeserving of it. So could we not do the same toward others who maybe are still unappreciative, aren't thoughtful of the God that we love and that we serve?

If God did that for us, certainly we could do that for them. And I could be careful to devote myself to doing what is good at home, at school, at work, in my community as a whole.

What is that going to look like? Well, what were some of the results of that? Let's finish this off. The end of verse 8, these things are excellent and they're profitable for everyone.

I think that these things refers back again to those precious truths that I just read. There's an inherent excellent nature in gospel truths because of who they come from.

They have the ability to affect change in the life of one previously bound by sin. then people, all people, profit and benefit through that one who has believed God and now carefully devotes himself to doing what is good.

[38:22] See how excellent and profitable the gospel is. I mean, it certainly was in my life excellent and profitable for me, but I hope for the people that I've come in contact with, there's some profitability from me coming in contact with this trustworthy, reliable, excellent truth of the gospel.

That's the way it's supposed to work out. This week, I should be able to say by the end of the week, and others around me hopefully should be able to say at the end of the week, man, it's been profitable having him as a husband or as a grandfather or as a fellow member of the church.

It has just been an encouragement to me. He has really helped me through life because of what he said or what he did. I think that's what God is calling us to as his children, as people who have believed God.

This week, I think we need to be careful that we are devoting ourselves to doing what is good. What will it look like for you this week?

I hope it implants some real truth motivated compulsion with you and excitement understanding what can God do even through me as I seek to do what is good in all these spheres of influence that he's given me.

[39 : 55] We certainly are going to need his help, so let's pray for that now, shall we? Father, as we think of this passage and the trustworthy sayings, Father, these things that you've even revealed in this passage of the gospel and where we were and what you did out of your nature as God, the grace and the mercy that you showed toward us, Father, our hearts have to bow before you and we must yield ourselves as living sacrifices unto you, the one who is worthy of our whole lives.

And Father, from what we've learned tonight, that means that I and others here who have believed God, we've got to be careful to devote ourselves to doing what is good.

And so I just ask that you would help us, give us insight into our own hearts, Father, of what might keep us from that and give us a confident expectation and anticipation of the good things that you can accomplish in us and through us in the lives of those who are still yet out there, not seeking to pursue doing good works for your glory and the wealth for others.

May we shine as those lights in the world this week and you accomplish your good purposes, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, go and devote yourself to doing what is good.

You're dismissed.