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## The Gospel Motivation of Good Works

2026-06-21 -Titus 3

If we are not saved by good works, why should we care about doing good works? Some say good works are not necessary (antinomianism), some say good works are optional for only serious Christians (carnal Christianity), and some say good works are the basis of salvation and God's acceptance (legalism). In Titus 3 and throughout the letter, Paul stresses both the need for good works and the right theological motivation for good works. What we discover in this text is that the call to good works does not contradict the gospel of grace, nor is it in spite of the gospel of grace, but the life of good works is actually propelled by the gospel of grace. Doctrine and duty, salvation and service, and theology and ethics can never be divorced. The gospel root produces godly fruit. A right understanding and a heartfelt embrace of the gospel of grace and all its facets, rather than dampening our zeal, is the very thing that motivates a life of good works.

Well, grace and peace to you from God our Father through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As mentioned, my name is Stephen Corbitt. I serve as one of the pastors at Christ the King Reformed Baptist Church. It is my great joy and privilege to be here with you this morning. We do look forward to next week when we have our joint service together. We are very excited for that as a church and really looking forward to that.

Just a reminder, today is Father's Day, so we brought some of these books here to give away. If you're a father, if you're aspiring to be a father, if you want to give it to a father, please take one of these as our gift. It is a wonderful book by Joel Beeke, a great theologian, and I read this book—an amazing book on how to lead your family as a man of God. So please take one of these before you head out and you'll be blessed by that.

This morning our text—we are continuing our way through the book of Titus. We are on Titus chapter 3. Pastor Brandon covered Titus chapter 1, Trevor was here last week and he covered Titus 2, and now we are on the last chapter here of Titus chapter 3. And if I may ask you, would you please rise to hear the reading of God's Word? I'm reading this out of the CSB version here. Now the word of the living God. And I encourage you to keep the Bibles open throughout the sermon and keep your eyes on the text.

***“Remind them to submit to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to slander no one, to avoid fighting, and to be kind, always showing gentleness to all people. For we too were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, 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. He poured out his Spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior so that, having been justified by his grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life. 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. But avoid foolish debates, genealogies, quarrels, and disputes about the law, because they are unprofitable and worthless. Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning, for you know that such a person has gone astray and is sinning; he is self-condemned. When I send Artemis or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me in Nicopolis, because I have decided to spend the winter there. Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey so that they will lack nothing. Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works for pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful. All those who are with me send you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.”*** (Titus 3:1–15 CSB)

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated.

Please join me now in a word of prayer.

*Father in heaven, we do sing of your loud, amazing love, and how can that be? So Father, we come and we ask that we would not have mere bare intellectual assent to what we hear in your word, that it wouldn't just go in one ear and that it would not percolate into our hearts, but we ask God that we would be ravished by the truth, and that we can sing this sincerely, that your love is truly amazing, and it is not a grudge, a begrudging thing, it is not a burden, but it is a joy to honor you. So I pray, Father, that you bless the preaching of your word this morning and bless the hearing of your word, and we pray this in Jesus' holy and precious name, amen.*

Now the main question I have for this morning is, what motivates you to do good works? Titus is all about good works, and one of the biggest questions is what motivates you to do good works?

For some people, they are motivated to do good works to earn God's favor. For the unbeliever, they think if they live a righteous life, they'll save themselves. It's a self-righteousness. But even for believers, they may not say it outright, but we often think, "If I don't do good works, God will not be pleased with me." Or you think, "If I failed somehow, I know I must try harder for Him to love me." We would never say we are saved by works, but we are often tempted to think that we have to maintain our relationship with God by our good works.

And then there are others who say, "Well, of course, good works can't earn me God's favor. Therefore, I really don't have to worry about good works at all. Like, don't you believe the gospel? God doesn't care about your works at all. Who cares about your performance? Who cares at all about a life of good works?" There's one very popular preacher, really a false teacher. He wrote, he said, "The law is not for you, the believer, who has been made righteous in Christ. The law is not applicable to someone who is under the new covenant of grace." He says, well, I don't have to worry about keeping the law. Who cares about doing good works? I'm under grace. I have freedom to do whatever I want. Who cares about good works?

Well, in this chapter, chapter three of Titus, Paul contradicts both of these ideas. On the one hand, Paul really emphasizes the necessity of good works. If you have your Bibles open there, look at these verses. He mentions it three times in this chapter. Verse 1: **be ready for every good work**. Verse 8: **I want those who have believed to devote themselves to good works**. Verse 14: **let our people learn to devote themselves to good works**. Good works, good works, good works. Three times.

But then on the other hand, if you look there in verse 5, what does he say? He says something quite remarkable. "**He saved us, not by works of righteousness that we had done.**" So he completely rejects the idea that good works save you.

So then, if we are called to do good works, and yet good works do not save me, what's the motivation to do good works at all? Well in this text, Paul demonstrates that the main encouragement to do good works is the gospel. It's not that you are motivated to work so that God will save you, but God has so graciously saved you that you are motivated to live for Him. That far from eliminating our desire to do good works, and far from any kind of easy believism or carnal Christianity, God's gracious salvation is the very thing that motivates you for a life of service.

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So that's what we're going to look at this morning. We'll look at it in a way—the first point is going to be very brief. We'll do a quick ascent in the first point, very short first point, a long time in the second point, so a long time there, remain altitude there, and then a quick descent in the third point, just to give you a map of where we're going. We'll have three points this morning.

### **The Command of Good Works (vv. 1-2)**

Here's the first point: the command of good works. So Paul makes a command of good works. In this entire letter, Paul is exhorting Titus and the Cretan church towards godly Christian conduct. Chapter 1 is about how do you do that in the church? Chapter 2 is how do you do that in the home? And now chapter 3 is asking the question, how do we live as Christians in a non-Christian society?

So then he gives us two directions really. He says we should submit to civil authorities. That's verse 1. He says, ***“Remind them to submit to rulers and authorities, to obey.”*** Now this is particularly relevant to the Cretans, the people he's writing to, because they were known to be a kind of rebellious type of people. Polybius, he's one of the ancient Greek historians. He was writing at that time, and he described the Cretans. He said they were constantly involved in insurrections, murders, and internecine wars. So Paul is trying to confront that and challenge that spirit and he says that they should have a posture of submission and obedience.

Now obviously that doesn't mean absolute and unqualified obedience. There are times where you should disobey the government. The Hebrew midwives, they disobeyed the Pharaoh. Daniel, he disobeyed the king of Babylon. Peter disobeyed the Sanhedrin in Acts 5. Remember what he said. He said, ***“We must obey God rather than people.”*** So clearly there are times where you should disobey. We can't talk about all those things. And so really this is not a call then to blind obedience. It's not a call to a low profile quietism. This is not a call to an idea where you can never ever critique the government or protest against the evils of the government. But overall it does mean that even in a pagan government like Rome, even if they are sometimes unjust and imperfect, the overall posture is that you should bend over backward to submit to them and obey their laws. That is what we should submit to civil government.

And here is a second idea. We should seek to do good to unbelievers (v.2). He says, ***“Remind them to be ready for every good work, to slander no one, to avoid fighting, and to be kind, always showing gentleness to all people.”*** And again, I can't spend too much time on this, we have a long text. But just to add some clarifying things, yes, do not slander anyone, but that does not mean you cannot identify evil and sin, and even name names when necessary. Yes, you should avoid fighting and be as kind as much as you can, but that doesn't mean you're called to be a limp-wristed pushover. It's not a call, it doesn't mean you can never be forceful, you should never fight, especially when it comes to the truth of the gospel, when that's at stake, especially when you see unjust suffering of people in the world, like persecution in Nigeria or abortion or slavery, of course you should speak up and fight. And he says we should show gentleness to all people. But again, we have to be very careful here. It doesn't mean you can never be blunt and firm. In fact, in verses 10 and 11, Paul says, ***“Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning, for you know that such a person has gone astray and is sinning. He is self-condemned.”*** That's kind of blunt and forceful of Paul. So he's not saying you should absolutize these traits, but still, the overall idea is that we should live as peaceably as we possibly can among unbelievers, among non-Christians. And that you should be ready for every kind

of good work. That is every type of work and every sphere of life, not just in the home, not just in the church, not just in civil authorities and civil responsibilities, but to all people, he says. To all people, even unbelievers, you should be eager to show good works.

So really Titus, if you could sum it up in two words, it's about good works, all about good works here. He wants the church to be full of good works. So it brings us back to our first initial question, why? Why should we care? Why should I be motivated to do good works? What is the reason for doing good works as a Christian? If that doesn't earn me salvation, why should I care?

### The Motivation of Good Works (vv. 3-8)

So here's our main body here, **the motivation of good works**. This is the most important part of the text, I think. So Paul, if you look at your text again, he makes a command in verses 1 to 2, and then he shifts there in verse 3, and he gives a theological rationale of why he should obey. He says in verse 3, "For," that's an important word, "**For this reason, for this very reason,**" as in verses 3 to 7, "**which is this glorious depiction of God's saving work in the gospel.**" Verses 3 to 7 give us the motivation that should drive us to do good works.

And Paul clarifies that at the end of it in verse 8. He says, "**This saying is trustworthy.**" Namely, what I just said in verses 3 to 7, that's a trustworthy saying. And he says, I don't want you to be shy or quiet or apologetic about it. I want you to be adamant. I want you to be emphatic. I want you to be assertive. And he says, "I want you to insist on these things." Titus, insist on these. Why? He says, "**so that those who have believed God might be careful to devote themselves to good works.**" So something about the gospel motivates good works, and that's what we're going to ask right now. A practical life of holiness is driven by understanding and embracing the glorious truths of God's saving work in the gospel.

How does that work? So here's the first point. It's probably the most important point. **God's grace and salvation motivates us (vv. 3-5a).**

First of all, notice, in verses 3-7, specifically 3-5, Paul does everything he can possibly do to press into our thick, self-righteous skulls that you do nothing, that none of your good works earns you salvation. It is entirely God. It is God alone who does it. Look at verse 3, he says, "**For we too were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another.**" Paul is saying, like, don't you remember before your conversion, you were just like the unbelieving world. You think you were better than them? You're just as vile as the most horrendous sinner. You have no moral superiority. You did not save yourself. You were absolutely helpless.

So then how did you get saved? Verse 4, "**But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, he saved us.**" We didn't do it. God did it. God is the one who did it. God is the one who sent His Son. God sent His Son and He appeared in His life, death, and resurrection, and He saved us. We did not do it. And why did He do it? Did He find something impressive in us? Was He responding to some good work that we did? Look at verse 5, he says, "**not by works of righteousness that we had done.**" We did absolutely nothing to earn salvation. So then why did God do it? He did it "**according to his mercy.**" You did not deserve salvation. It was all based on God's merciful character to undeserving sinners. And then verse

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7, we see the parallel verse there. He says, *“having been justified by his grace.”* You are justified. You're not only forgiven of your sins, you are seen as absolutely righteous in God's holy court. Why? By his grace.

So here's Paul. He's all talking about do good works, do good works three times, and in the midst of it he said your good works are not going to save you. Why does he do that? That's such an interesting thing, isn't it? It's almost a strange logic. Why does Paul do that? I believe Paul is correcting our subtle and natural inclination toward a legalistic spirit. When Paul keeps emphasizing good works, the great danger is that we can start to think that God's attitude toward us is based off our spiritual performance.

I know, you probably know how this feels. You have a good day, you have a great day. You say, “Well, I did a lot of good works today. I read the Bible, I prayed this morning, I came to church, I shared the gospel with a friend, I donated to a good Christian cause. God, his smile is upon me today. God, he favors me today.” But then what happens when you are not as consistent in your spiritual disciplines as you used to be? What happens when you start to realize, I actually don't do that many good works? What happens when you return to that old sinful habit? We begin to think, well, God, he won't take me back. We start to think, God won't love me after I've abused the gospel so many times. Maybe God was gracious to me at my conversion, but today I'm so sinful. I'm so persistent in my sin. God has surely rejected me.

And then what do you do? You start thinking, well, I have to earn my favor with God. You start to think, I have to work hard for him to love me. I will pray more, I will give more, I will read more, I will serve more, I will do all these good works, and then God will accept me. And then what happens is that you turn those good works into the slavish, fearful yoke. And you twist the very purpose of good works.

Now today's Father's Day, so this is the father's illustration, you can imagine a father who is always unhappy and nitpicky with his son. So then the son, he works really hard to earn his father's favor, his love, acceptance. So he does a lot of good things, right? He cleans his room, he studies hard, he plays the sports that his dad likes, but always in the back of his mind, he is never sure if his father loves him or not. So he is motivated to do good works not out of a joyful gladness to please his dad or to make him proud, but out of this terrible anxiety to earn his dad's favor. And eventually for that young person, what happens is that he tries hard and he realizes, I never measure up. And what happens to him? He ends up resenting his dad.

And the exact same thing happens with a Christian and his legalistic heart. He views God as not a kind and gracious Father who views me entirely on the merits of Jesus Christ alone, but he views the Father as this unhappy Scrooge. Always unhappy with you, always angry. And then what do you do? You try to work yourself, you work your fingers down to the bone. Well, always with the suspicion that, God, he's angry with me. And then what happens? You end up resenting God. We see the very same words that Martin Luther said when he was at the point of despair. He said, “Love God. Do I love God?” He says, “Sometimes I hate Him.”

So Paul, what is he doing? He is saying here, do good works. But no, God does not say, “Do good works and then you will become righteous and I will love you.” That's not how it works. God says, “My attitude toward you is not based off your performance.” So that even on those days when you commit the most heinous sins, even if you're so inconsistent and unfaithful, even if you make promises and you fail to meet those promises, even if you sin, you rise up, you fight again, you sin, you sin again, you repeat this entire

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cycle, even when your heart is so far from God, and your heart is cold towards God. God still says, “You are righteous in my sight and I love you. I will always love you and I will never leave you.”

So then what happens? How does that motivate good works now? Well now, it's out of God's grace and not out of God's severity are you motivated to do good works. You start to think, “How can God be so kind and gracious to such a sinner as I? How can God, I've sinned against a holy God, I still sin, I still fall, I deserve nothing but eternal wrath and judgment, and yet He still loves me. And yet He still sent His Son to die for me, and yet He is still with me. How could I not love this gracious God? How could I not want to live for Him? How could I not live a life of good works to the glory of His name?” Not out of slavish, begrudging fear. Not out of trying to earn God's favor, but as Paul said in 2 Corinthians, the love of Christ compels me. God does not want you to do good works out of a legalistic heart. He wants you to do it out of love.

So stop trying to earn his favor. Listen to one theologian, Horatius Bonar. He said it this way: “We serve him not in order to win his favor, but because we have already won it in simply believing his record concerning his Son. Terror accomplishes no real obedience. Suspense brings forth no fruit unto holiness. Only the certainty of love, forgiving love, can do this. It is this certainty that melts our heart, dissolves our chains, disburdens our shoulders so that we stand erect and makes us to run in the way of the divine commandments.”

It is out of His love that we obey. So God's grace in salvation motivates us to good works (vv.3-5a).

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Here's the second point. God's renewing work motivates us (v 5b). Now one question is, if we were sinners, full of malice and evil, then how is it possible for me to do good works at all? So even if I'm justified, that doesn't mean we are actually capable of doing good works, right? I'm just righteous before God, but what about me and my ability to do good works? So then we can get this almost defeated mindset. We start saying things like, well, I'm just a sinner. I'm just a sinner and I can't shake my old habits. Like, have you not seen my upbringing? I wasn't raised in a Christian home. I am just a sinner and I'm just, that's just how I am. And what happens? You have the spiritual defeatism right from the gate.

But listen to what Paul says, he completely destroys that kind of reasoning. He says in verse 5, God saved us “**through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit.**” So two things are noted here, right? The negative aspect, the washing of regeneration. As in your sin is like a stain, it's this dirty thing, it's a pollution. It has polluted you. It's like dirt that just sticks onto you. You can't do anything but sin. You go

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from one iniquity to another iniquity. What Paul is saying is that when God saved you, He spiritually washed you. He washed away the pollution of sin. And how did He do that cleansing work? He did it through regeneration. It's a cleansing, it's a washing through regeneration. The regenerative work in the heart and that word regeneration—it's from the Greek word and it's two words, it's a prefix and a noun, "*palingenesia*", new genesis. It literally means new Genesis. And Paul is saying that when you're saved you underwent a "new Genesis," a new birth, a new beginning, that you are no longer your former sinful self.

So while there is continuity with your former self, you have the same general personality, right? You have the same personal history, you have the same physical features, there are a lot of continuities, but in the washing of regeneration, the old self stained with sin, the old self which was once deceived, disobedient, and enslaved, that old self is no longer here. That old self has been washed away. That old self is absolutely dead and gone. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:11, "***And some of you used to be like this, but you were washed.***" The old self has been crucified with Christ. He is dead.

But not only is it that negative work, Paul adds that there is a renewal by the Holy Spirit. Renewal by the Holy Spirit. Now notice, he didn't say that you've been repaired by the Holy Spirit. He didn't say that you've been restored. He's not talking about just God fixes a few things about you. He says that you've been renewed, that you have been completely made new. When you become a Christian, you don't just become a nice person. When you become a Christian, you become a new person. You are absolutely new. This is no superficial, piecemeal change, but it's a radical, heart level, deep change in the core of who you are. The apostle Paul said, in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "***If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away and the new has come.***"

So that means yes, you still sin. Yes, you still must wage war and fight every single day against sin. Yes, you will never, never gain perfection in this life. But still, as Paul commanded in Romans 6:11, he said, "***Consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.***" Listen to how John Murray, this great theologian, he said,

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"We cannot allow for any compromise on the doctrine that every believer is a new man, that the old man has been crucified, that the body of sin has been destroyed, and that as a new man in Christ Jesus, he serves God in the newness which is none other than that of the Holy Spirit."

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So then how does that motivate us to good works? Well, remember, when Christians fall into sin, they start getting this fatalistic attitude, right? They start thinking, well, I'm just a sinner. That's just how I am. I'm just my old self. I'm never going to change things. I can't do any good works. But Titus 3 is here to say, No. That is absolutely wrong. You have died to your sin. You have to say, I am regenerated. I have been renewed. I have been born again. That is not who I am. That's the old me. I have been born again. I can live a life full of good fruit, full of good works. So you need to understand that your transformation, your renewing, God's renewing work in your life, motivates you not to be fatalistic, but to do good works.

### God's Empowerment Motivates Us (v. 6)

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Here's the third point. God's empowerment motivates us as well. Look at verse 6, he says, **\*\*“He poured out his Spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior.”\*\*** Now in scripture, what does that mean, the Spirit poured out upon us? Well, in Scripture, when the Spirit is poured out upon someone, it means empowerment. You think about the Old Testament, you think the Spirit comes upon Saul or Samson or Gideon and David and empowers them to lead. And you hear this in Ezekiel 36, it's not just national leaders, but God's Spirit will be poured out on everyone, all of God's people.

This is what it says here in Ezekiel, chapter 36, verses 25 to 27. Notice also the water imagery is very similar to what we just read. ***“I will also sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will place my Spirit within you and cause you to follow my statutes and carefully observe my ordinances.”*** (Ezekiel 36:25–27)

And then when is that promise fulfilled? It's fulfilled in Acts chapter 2, the day of Pentecost. The Spirit is poured out on all the disciples and remember, all these uneducated fishermen, now they're all of a sudden turning the world upside down. How? Well, they've been empowered by the Spirit. And Paul is saying that the same Spirit that empowered David, the same Spirit that empowered the apostolic church, that same Spirit has been poured out upon you. And not just in little dribbles, not like a tiny trickle in a desert wasteland. He said, the Spirit has been poured out upon us abundantly. There's like a flood, a deluge, and a tiny little thimble that God was so lavish and rich and hyper-abundant in pouring out the Spirit in you.

Which means what? That while regeneration and renewal means we can do good works, the Spirit's empowerment gives us strength to carry out those good works. We are renewed, but we are still, you have to remember this, we're still weak, pitiful, and really impotent in ourselves, so that if we're left to our own strength, we can't do a single good thing. If we're left to ourselves, we can't accomplish a single feat. But while we are weak, we must still say, the Spirit of God has been poured upon me. The Spirit has empowered me. The Spirit is with me. Even though in my own native powers I cannot do any good, I still believe that the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead, He lives in me and He can empower me to do good works.

I remember about like 10 years ago I was thinking about the idea of going into a pastoral ministry. It was a very frightful thing for me. I felt very inadequate, I felt very weak, I felt this is not a thing for me. I remember sharing this with a friend, a close friend of mine. We were both in the Marine Corps together and I told him, I don't think I should do this. I don't know if I should pursue this goal. Should I do this? Like, who am I that can preach God's word? Who am I that can become a pastor? Like, who am I that I should do that? And I remember what he told me that day. He didn't tell me, “Well, Stephen, you're just a gifted man.” He didn't say, “Stephen, you just got to believe in yourself.” Or, “Stephen, just work hard and then you can succeed.” He didn't do any of that. He said, really, he just quoted one verse. 2 Timothy 1:7, he said, almost in this rebuking and perplexed way, he said, “What are you talking about? God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and self-control.” We are weak, yes, but a spirit is powerful. And he's been poured out upon you to do good works. So the Spirit of God and His empowerment motivates us to do good works.

### **God's Promise of Eternal Life Motivates Us (v. 6)**

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And then the fourth one, God's promise of eternal life motivates us. Verse 7, he says, ***“so that, having been justified by his grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life.”*** Why does Paul mention that right at the end? That would have been sufficient. That was a lot of good stuff already, Paul, but at the very end, he had this little clause about becoming heirs with the hope of eternal life. Why does he do that? How does that motivate good works?

One of the most potent sources of discouragement in the Christian life is when you see the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. And when after all the things, after we've tried to live a holy and obedient life to God, there's all these people who could care less about Christ and His church. There's all these people who could care less about good works. There's all these people who live sinful, deceptive lives, indulging in whatever sinful pleasures they want, and it would be okay if they were suffering alongside of us, but they're not suffering, they're actually prospering. They're healthy. They're way better off than we are. We see that guy and he has a big house and four lakeside cabins and a comfy 401k, and here I am with this crummy car, I can barely pay the bills. Here's that guy, he plays politics in the workplace, and he skates by telling people he's going to do something, he doesn't really do it at all, and he gets a promotion, and I get overlooked because I'm that weird Christian guy. Or here's that guy, he goes to college for four years, he sleeps around, he ends up with his beautiful wife, and after years of prayer and sexual purity, fighting for sexual purity, I'm still alone, I'm still single. We understand that sometimes their health is excellent, and then we get diagnosed with a disease. Their marriage is happy while mine is struggling. They have children, and then they abort their children, and I'm struggling, my wife is struggling with infertility.

So do you understand that? It's that feeling that I spent all this time trying to live a godly life. I spent all this time trying to do good works among unbelievers, and where has it gotten me? Why should I keep on doing good works? It's destroying my life. And everyone else is just living for the world, and they're doing great. Why should I devote myself to good works? I believe Paul adds this little clause about eternal life to say, do not be discouraged. Continue doing good works. Continue pressing on even in suffering and in loss. Persist even if you gain nothing in this life. Why? Because we are heirs with the hope of eternal life.

Insist on these things. There is an inheritance waiting for you on the other side. Which means what? On the one hand, that means none of your work is in vain. None of your work is in vain, while everyone else is pursuing things that will end up in the trash bin of eternal insignificance. Everything you do matters for eternity. Paul says in Galatians 6:9, ***“Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up.”*** And on top of that, it means that all the pleasures of this world, all of that is dwarfed by the riches of a thousand lifetimes in the age to come. Are you going to live for that paltry stuff, the sticks and bubbles of this world? Don't be distracted by what Jesus mentioned in Mark 4:19. He said, ***“the worries of this age, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires of other things enter in and choke the word and it becomes unfruitful.”*** Well Paul is saying you have something far greater than the deceitfulness of those riches and the desires of the world. You have an inheritance that outshines all of that. So do not lose heart.

So then why should you do good works? For the gospel and all its glory is the reason we should do it. As in, God saved me by His grace, therefore I respond not to earn His favor, but out of love and gratitude. God regenerated and renewed me, therefore I'm not my old self, and I can actually do good works. God empowers me by His Spirit, even though I am weak, He gives me strength to do it. God promises me eternal life, so that even if I suffer and lose in this life, there's something far better in the age to come. So then

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why would we not be devoted to good works? We have every motivation to be zealous for good works. The gospel motivates us to good works.

### **Practical Steps Toward Good Works (vv 9-15)**

Now let me just close. Now we have to cover the entire chapter here. So the last couple of verses here, and I'll fly by very quickly, just practical steps toward good works here. We'll just ask, what do we do next? There's two practical steps.

One, discern worthy and unworthy pursuits (vv 9-11). Now notice at the end of verse 8, Paul says these, that is these good works, they are profitable and they are good for everyone. As in good works aren't just any kind of work, they have to be profitable, they have to be beneficial, they should have some kind of positive outcome for others. Now in contrast, Paul says in verse 9, ***“But avoid foolish debates, genealogies, quarrels, and disputes about the law, because they are unprofitable and worthless. Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning, for you know that such a person has gone astray and is sinning; he is self-condemned.”*** So Paul is saying, don't waste your time on false teachers and divisive people. Focus really on worthy pursuits and don't waste your time endlessly debating heretics.

And of course, Paul doesn't mean that Titus should never engage in controversy. Paul doesn't mean you shouldn't defend the gospel. Obviously you should. He says in chapter 1, verse 11, ***it is necessary to silence the false teachers.*** Verse 13, he says, ***rebuke them sharply.*** So the issue is not debates. The issue is foolish debates, pointless debates. What the other party is never going to change. And Paul's point is that practically you need to discern what is a worthy pursuit and what's a waste of time. There's a distinction between good works and busy work. You're going to be asked to do like 100 things. You have to discern what is actually good and profitable. What brings glory to God? What maximizes my giftings? What advances His kingdom? What edifies the church? You have to discern, then, what exactly is a good work.

And then secondly, the very last point, practically provide for particular people (vv 12-15). Verses 12 to 14. He says, ***“When I send Artemis or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me in Nicopolis, because I have decided to spend the winter there. Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey so that they will lack nothing. Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works for pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.”*** All those who are with me send you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.

So first notice that good works are practical here. They're very practical. Paul is saying, he's discussing his travel plans, and in the midst of it, he's saying, I'm going to send Zenas and Apollos, and I want you to be diligent to help them in their material needs. So in that time, traveling Christian workers were dependent on local generosity to meet their needs. They needed the church to meet their needs of hospitality, of shelter, of food, of clothing, of supplies, all the practical necessities of life. So Paul has in mind then, when it comes to good works, not just spiritual things, okay? Not just prayer and spiritual encouragement. Paul has in mind real material and physical tangible needs. And he clarifies that in verse 14, right? He says that our people learn to devote themselves to good works, he says, for pressing needs. That is real, tangible, urgent needs.

So it has to be a practical thing and on top of that it should be particular. It should be particular as in Paul does not ask Titus to provide for the Roman Empire. He asked Titus to provide for Zenas and Apollos. These are particular people. God does not tell you to love the world. He never says you got to love the world. He says love your neighbor. As in it is a lot easier, in many ways a lot easier to love the world. You just give money to some faithless cause. It is a lot more difficult to love particular people. To that unbelieving coworker who makes snide remarks about Christianity, to love him and say, Well, I will help you, and spend my Saturday helping him move, and then to pray for that individual, that is a lot harder than loving the world. So love particular people.

Here's a good quote. This is to close our time from C.S. Lewis. I love this. It could be apocryphal, I think it's real, but he says,

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*“It is easier to be enthusiastic about humanity, with a capital H, than it is to love individual men and women, especially those who are uninteresting, exasperating, depraved, or otherwise unattractive. Loving everybody in general may be an excuse for loving nobody in particular.”*

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So don't go seeking to love and change the world necessarily. Seek to bless the people around you in the pews, and I'm very excited when Christ the King comes together with Cornerstone. Let us be a people that are zealous to do good works to one another.

So let me close our time in a word of prayer.

*Gracious God and Father, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we thank you so much for the glorious truth of the gospel, that we don't have to earn your favor by our hard work, but that you love us, Lord God, that you have changed us from our old person and made us new, that you have empowered us by the Spirit, and that, God, there is a day where we will reap what we sow. So I pray, Father, for Cornerstone Church, I ask God that you will make us a people zealous for good works. Amen.*