

THE Rock COMMUNITY CHURCH

Titus 3:1-15

“Grace - Motivated Graciousness”

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Speaker: Pastor Drew Hunsley

Anaheim Hills, CA | RockCC.com

21:42

So I want to invite you, if you brought your copy of God's Word, to go ahead and make your way to Titus chapter three. If you didn't, there should be a Bible underneath of your seat that you can follow along.

21:51

We're going to be on page number 1,219 and those. So I'll help you find that. And if you want a really nice Bible, I think there's a few of them out there in the lost and found that we're getting ready to give away.

22:02

So if you want to grab one of those, you know, wait it out until the 27th and then feel free to grab that as well. So, but Titus is just such a wonderful book. I hope you've been with us over the past several weeks that we've been studying this.

22:16

So, you know, over the last two weeks specifically, we've looked at chapter two as a church. And chapter two talks all about the good news of salvation... [audio cuts out]... with one another inside of the church. And so if you were with us a couple of weeks ago, as we looked at the beginning of chapter two, it makes just very practical application for how we're supposed to grow up and how we're supposed to act and treat one another within the church.

22:48

And I love the beginning of chapter two because it gives us instructions for older men, for older women, for younger men, and for younger women. I'm not here to tell you which one of those groups you fit into, but I know there's something for you in there, right?

23:03

I think that passage also just does a wonderful job. It gives us this beautiful touch on an important biblical expectation because it tells us that older men, you're expected to take what God has given to you and helped you to grow up in.

23:17

You should be taking that and giving it to a younger man, teaching a younger man what it looks like to live out their faith. And same thing for the older women. You should teach the younger women what it looks like to be a woman of godliness.

23:30

And so just a wonderful passage a couple of weeks ago, and then last week, if you weren't with us, we looked at the end of Titus chapter two, and there's just this beautiful summary statement of the gospel in those verses, right?

23:43

That the hope that we find in Jesus and the fact that we can have hope through the redeeming work of Jesus on the cross, that Jesus went to the cross to pay the penalty. He atoned for our sins on the cross where he paid that sin debt, and he covered the debt when he gave his life as a sacrifice for us.

24:04

We also see in those verses that we're called to purity, that we're called to acting differently in our lives, to live self-controlled and upright and godly lives in response to this saving work of Jesus that he talks about there.

24:17

And so now as we pick up Titus chapter three this week, we're gonna look at the whole chunk of Titus chapter three. But in this chapter, Paul directs Titus's attention now to how believers are supposed to relate to those that are outside of the church.

24:31

We looked in chapter two at how we're supposed to relate to one another inside of the church, but now he kind of turns our attention outward in how we should interact with those who are not Christians or not believers.

24:44

And the idea that we're gonna see in this chapter is that we should be gracious in our interactions with the world, that we should be gracious in our interactions with unbelieving people because God has been gracious to us as undeserving sinners.

24:59

Because we didn't deserve God's mercy and God's grace and all that God has given to us. In the same way that we have received generously from God, we should give generously to other people. We should forgive generously.

25:11

We should show grace and mercy to those that maybe don't deserve it in our lives. And so we're gonna look at that in just a minute. So we're gonna bite off a big passage. We've got 15 verses that we're gonna read this week, but I wanna tell you, the ideas all tie together.

25:26

I couldn't figure out how to split this up. So I said, let's just take it on in one big bite, right? So I invite you to read along in your copy or read along on the screens as I read Titus chapter three.

25:37

We're gonna start in verse one. Paul tells Titus, he says, remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy towards all people.

25:55

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our savior appeared, he saved us.

26:14

Not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, who he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our savior.

26:26

So that being justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 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.

26:45

These things are excellent and profitable for people. But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and

worthless. As for a person who stirs up division after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him.

27:03

Knowing that such a person is warped and sinful, he is self-condemned. But when I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.

27:16

And do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they lack nothing. And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works so as to help cases of urgent need and not be unfruitful.

27:31

All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. These are the words of our Lord. Would you pray with me now? God, we thank you as we have the opportunity to gather together here as a church.

27:44

God, as I have opportunity to pray before we dive more deeply into your word. God, I just wanna take a moment and thank you for all the ways that you work in our lives. God, I wanna thank you as we reflect on all the many ways. And God, we're gonna talk about how you have saved us and redeemed us and made us yours. And we're thankful for that as we look at this passage. But God, there are so many ways that you bless us. I pray that we would be people who would slow down and reflect and thank you for the ways that you have blessed us in our lives and so, so abundantly.

28:16

God, we also wanna pray that you would work in the lives of those who are hurting within our church body this morning. God, I know for a fact that there are marriages that are on the rocks and are hurting this week. And God, we pray that you would work in those marriages. God, that you would help husbands and wives to love their spouses the way

that you call them to. God, I know that there are tired parents that are in our church this week.

28:40

And God, I just pray that you would help them to have endurance to love their children, to love their families the way that you command us to. God, I also know that there are those that are sick and hurting within our body. God, we pray that you would heal those that are sick. And God, if you choose to allow those illnesses to persevere, God, I pray that you would help the people to persevere more. God, that they would trust and know that you are in control and that you are good even in physical illness, even in weakness, even in moments when our bodies fail us.

29:12

God, we pray that you would help them to endure. And finally, God, I wanna pray for those that are mourning the loss of a loved one as we've had some losses in our church recently. God, I pray that you would, God, just be the eternal comforter, that you promise that you will be. God, that you would wrap your loving arms around those that are hurting this week. And God, that you would remind them that even though death is an enemy that we face for now, God, it's not going to be an enemy forever.

29:40

God, that you have the power over sin and over death, and you have victory that you are going to bring one day over that great enemy, death. And so God, we look forward to that day, but we pray that you would comfort those who are hurting as well. So God, we give this time to you. We pray that you would open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of your law as we study and consider Titus 3 this morning. And God, we pray that everything that we study, every word that is spoken, every thought that is thought and received today, God, that it would bring glory to you because you are worthy of everything that we've got to give and so much more. So we give this time to you and we thank you in Jesus's beautiful name that we can come and that we can pray, amen.

30:22

All right, well, as we jump into our passage this morning, we've got a big chunk that we're looking at in Titus chapter three, but the first thing that we see is just in these first two verses as Paul encourages Titus, hey, make sure that we're modeling model behavior before the outside world.

30:40

And he talks about these two verses. He kind of explains how the church and how Christians are supposed to relate to those who are gonna tell us how we should relate to those. And then he continues in kind of the end of verse one and in verse two, he also talks about how we should relate not just to the authorities in our lives, but to all those who are outside of the family of faith.

31:01

So let's look at verse one. He starts right in here and he doesn't pull any punches as we just dive right in in verse one. He tells us that Christians must be submissive to the rulers and authorities that are over us and that we need to obey them.

31:15

So far as we are able to under the law of God, obviously we're gonna touch on that in just a minute. If someone tells us to do something that God has forbidden, we've got an issue there, but as far as we are able to, we should be submissive to the governing authorities and obey them as we're able to.

31:31

So I want to point out for just a second that this isn't an isolated comment. This isn't just something that Paul had an issue with here with Titus in the church in Crete. We actually see Paul talk about this same idea in the book of Romans.

31:46

In Romans 13 verses one and two, he says something very similar. He says, let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

32:00

Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. Strong words for us and reminding us that God put those people in those positions above us, and that we should be obedient as we're able.

32:15

But maybe you heard that, maybe you thought, well, Paul's got an issue in Titus, Paul's got this issue that he talks about in Romans. Maybe this is just a Paul thing. Well, actually, the apostle Peter has something to say about it as well.

32:25

In his letter, 1 Peter, in 1 Peter chapter two, he says, be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

32:42

You know, this is an idea that we see in Scripture. We are called, we are commanded to be obedient to those that God has put in positions of authority over us as far as we are able to. Now, I heard that thought that you just had, right?

32:55

Because we may be sitting here thinking, well, what if an authority tells me to do something that goes against my conscience, that goes against what God has told us in his word? I think it's important for us to note that ultimately we're obedient to a higher power than state officials or local officials or national government leaders or positions of authority bosses or police officers or whoever it may be.

33:21

We are ultimately responsible to a higher authority. And we see that idea talked about in Acts chapter five. There's one statement in here that I think is probably gonna be familiar

to you, but let me just set the stage briefly because in Acts five, what we have are the apostles that are there in Jerusalem.

33:40

They're spreading the message of Jesus as Jesus has left the scene and the apostles are telling anybody and everybody that they can find, they wanna tell people about Jesus. And the religious establishment has said, enough of this, you guys need to shut up, right?

33:54

And they have told the apostles, hey, you need to stop preaching about Jesus. You need to stop this mess that you're stirring up here in our city. And so the apostles had been arrested, had been put in jail, had actually been led out of jail by a supernatural act of God.

34:10

And now they're standing before the high priest in Jerusalem as we see this interaction in Acts chapter five. We see in Acts 5:27, it says that when they had brought them, they set them, the apostles before the council and the high priest questioned them saying, we strictly charged you not to teach in this name, in the name of Jesus.

34:30

Yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this man's blood on us. But Peter and the apostles answered, we must obey God rather than men. It's this incredible face off.

34:43

And we latch onto those words that we must obey God rather than men because that speaks to a little bit of how we need to deal with our interactions with authorities at times. Because if someone in your life, whether it's a boss, whether it's the government, whoever it may be, if someone tells you to directly disobey something that God has told you to do, well, we choose to obey God rather than men.

35:07

They tell you to do something that God has forbidden. We obey God rather than men. But much of what I've seen that I would classify as Christian disobedience, whether it's over the last few years and all the stuff that has happened or whether it's just in normal life now, much of what I've seen that I would classify as Christian disobedience is not because a person or a group was being obedient to God rather than men.

35:32

Think oftentimes it boils down to, I don't like you. I don't agree with your policies. And so I'm gonna go do what I want instead of what I've been told to do. That's not the attitude that Paul's talking about here.

35:43

If God has commanded or forbidden something that our leaders are telling us to go against, well, we choose to obey God rather than men. But if I don't like a policy or a law because it goes against what I feel, too bad, right?

35:56

Too bad, that's not our decision to make. Many Christians act like we only have a responsibility to submit to authority if we agree with it. That's not submission. If you only submit to an authority that you agree with when they make a law that you agree with or they make a law that you like or is convenient for you, that's not submission, that's not obedience.

36:17

That's just called doing what you want to do. God has commanded us in Titus chapter three. Romans 13 and 1 Peter two. Several places in God's inspired, inerrant, perfect word, authoritative word. He has commanded us to be obedient to our leaders because it's a good witness for the sake of the gospel if we are good citizens, if we are model citizens in our culture.

36:45

If we only submit to laws or leaders or commands that we like, That doesn't represent anything except for what every other person in the world does. I'm going to do what I want to do and I'm not going to do the things that I don't want to do.

36:58

God has called us to respect and honor the authority that he has placed in those positions of authority. Now I know that we live in a world and we live in a country and a culture where we are a democratic republic, right?

37:11

We get to vote for our leaders. We get to vote for people and sometimes even the laws specifically, the propositions that come out, we get to have a say in those things. And you may look at a leader and say, well, I didn't vote for him.

37:23

You know, he's a Republican or he's a Democrat and I don't like this policy or that policy. And you're free to have all of those feelings, right? We should be good American citizens who vote our morals and stand for what we believe is right.

37:36

But also, we have to acknowledge and realize and remember the fact that we have a God who is in control of all things. God is on the throne in heaven and nothing, nothing happens in this world apart from his control outside of his sovereignty in life.

37:55

He's in control. That means that if somebody that you didn't like ended up in a position of authority over you, God had some control over that, right? Romans 13 tells us that God has placed those people in positions of authority.

38:10

So when we obey those that are over us, we don't obey them because they deserve it. Because the reality is most of the time they don't deserve it, right? Most of the time they can, we have a lot of wicked evil people that are in leadership.

38:22

And I say that because all of us are at our core wicked evil people. We're all sinners that need to be saved by the grace of God. That's what part of this passage actually talks about, right? So we don't obey them, we don't respect them, and we don't submit to them because they deserve it, but we submit because Jesus deserves it and he has commanded us to. We look at these verses, Paul reminds Titus, he says, remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities and to be obedient.

38:54

But then he continues on and he starts talking about what it looks like to relate to just kind of the general population outside of the church, outside of the family of faith. And he lists these characteristics that should characterize Christian behavior as we live out our faith before the outside world.

39:10

He continues on, he says that we should be ready for every good work, that we should speak evil of no one, that we should avoid quarreling, that we should be gentle, that we should show perfect courtesy towards all people.

39:24

You know, as I look at that list, what I see there is not different things that, you know, this person can be capable of speaking evil of no one, but this person over here is going to avoid quarreling.

39:36

This person over here is going to be ready for every good work. I don't think these are describing different people. I think there are different ways of describing, reflecting upon different sides of the same person.

39:49

There are varied ways of describing the same thing because we look at this passage and I think, I think, right? This is just, this is just me for a minute. But I think when I look around at Christians, I look around at how we are known and represented in the world that we live in, in our culture today.

40:11

I think that Christians are most often known, not for what we believe, not for what we stand for, but we're most often known for what we stand against. I think we're most often known as people who stand against this policy or against that policy.

40:27

And, you know, the reality is that we should stand for the truth in a culture that seems determined to abandon truth. But we also need to reflect the attitude of Christian love that is mentioned and commanded here in Titus 3 verses 1 and 2.

40:43

You know, when I turn on the news or I see a report of angry Christians protesting and screaming with anger and malice about some policy that they disagree with. I just, I don't think that's the representation of Christian faith that Paul and God is commanding of us here in these verses.

41:05

You know, Ephesians chapter 4 encourages us to speak the truth, right? It tells us in Ephesians 4, 15 that we need to speak the truth. But you know, it also tells us in that same verse to speak the truth in love.

41:19

See there's a difference between someone that just says, no, I got to tell them because it's true. And I'm going to tell them and I'm going to be angry about it. Being someone who speaks the truth in love.

41:30

Ephesians 4:15 says, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ. Speaking the truth in love is a sign of Christian maturity as we grow up in our faith, as we learn what it looks like to be more and more and more like Jesus on a regular basis.

41:47

It starts to change the way that we interact with people. It starts to change the way that we respond. We don't just yell angrily at someone that we disagree with. We tell them what's true, but we also love them.

42:00

We're ready for every good work. We speak evil of no one. We avoid quarreling. We should be gentle. We should show perfect courtesy towards all. And we must love the world and those in it by telling them the truth, but we should do so with the attitude that's reflected here in these verses.

42:19

Paul has challenged us to model behavior before the outside world, but I also see in verses three through eight, he continues on and he calls us out and creates a little bit of humility in us as he talks about the motivating grace that we're going to see in these verses.

42:35

Because in verse two, Paul calls believers to love their neighbors, to love the non - Christians that are around them, to do good to and for them. But verse three tackles an objection that I think Paul just, he saw it coming, right?

42:49

You may have thought this as we're talking about loving those that maybe we don't agree with and verse three tackles that objection that often arises in our hearts. Because you know what? Sometimes our neighbors aren't actually that lovable.

43:03

Hey, love the person that... I don't want to! That person's difficult to love sometimes, right? I think Paul's point here is he looks at the Christians and he reminds them, hey, you may say that that neighbor, that that person in your life that's pretty unlovable, I want to remind you of something.

43:23

You were pretty unlovable one day and Jesus came in and he loved you even though you didn't deserve to be loved. Christians should be humbled if we realize that if it wasn't for the grace and the generous love of God, we would be no different than those neighbors that we're sitting here saying are unlovable.

43:40

Titus 3:3, he tells us to love those outside of the church in verse two and he continues in verse three, he says, for we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy and hated by others and hating one another.

43:59

I think in verse three, Paul's describing this pre -conversion Christian. He's characterizing us by utter wickedness and selfishness. And the reason that he does this is to show us that because we were so messed up before we came to faith in Jesus, we should be more merciful to those who might still be kind of messed up now.

44:19

We show mercy and generosity and kindness to those that are messed up because we remember just how messed up we were. He continues on in verses four through eight and there's this awesome but in the middle of this passage.

44:34

Because in verse three, he says, you were, short version, you were pretty busted up, right? You were pretty messed up, you were evil people. And then he continues in verse four with this awesome, but you know what?

44:47

God is good and God stepped into the story moment. Even though we used to be like those that are around us who do not know God, God stepped in and God saved us through his work. Now, if we look at these verses, you start looking at it and you start to see there's some overarching themes that are just really clear in here, right?

45:07

Because we look at these verses and you look at four through eight and you see it talks about the goodness and loving kindness of our God. Says that he saved us. You know what it doesn't say? That you were good enough to deserve saving.

45:24

He actually says the exact opposite, right? In verse five, he says, it's not because of works that we have done in righteousness, but because of God's mercy that he chose to save us. It's not because of your good works.

45:38

It's not because you did something to earn your salvation. It's not even because you chose Jesus, right? Because even that, like let's just pause for a half a second here. If you chose Jesus and that's the reason why he loves you, well, that's something that you did.

45:53

That's a work of yours, not a work of God's. Tells us in these verses, when the goodness and loving kindness of God our savior appeared, he saved us. Not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit, who he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our savior.

46:18

So that being justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This saying is trustworthy and I want you to insist on these things. Titus, make sure they hear this one.

46:32

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. And verse three tells us about how terrible we were. Verse four through eight tells us that a good and loving God shows up on the scene and He saved us because He's awesome.

46:53

Not because I am, not because you are, because He is. It's not because of our goodness, it's because of His. Because of His mercy that He saved us. You know it says in verses five and six if we look at them it tells us that sinners enter into salvation because of God's mercy in Christ.

47:11

But I want you to slow down for just a second because there's a couple of really important things in here and we got to make sure that we get the order, the progression right in these things. Or otherwise it can totally send us off into this weird cultish false belief system.

47:27

Because there's two things that are true that we see here in this passage and it's really important. Because in verse eight it tells us that our salvation, that when God has worked in us, salvation causes good works to be a part of our life.

47:41

It says in verse eight that we should devote ourselves to good works. In fact that was the main thrust of what Pastor Bruce was talking about last week, right? That because we have been saved that we should live out our faith, that we should be committed to, that we're set free from sin and we're slaves now to righteousness, we're slaves to God.

48:01

Our salvation causes good works. It tells us in verse eight, but our salvation is not caused by good works. We are not saved because we were good. In fact verse five makes it pretty clear that's exactly the opposite of what is going on here.

48:20

Because in verse five it tells us it is not by works that we have done that we are saved, but according to God's mercy. It's according to the mercy of God. He saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy.

48:36

Which continuing down in verse six says that he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ. You know apart from the work of God in our lives we were all hopeless. That includes the apostle Paul, that includes pastors, that includes every single person in the world.

48:55

We cannot claim that our salvation has anything to do with us because we are not ultimately virtuous good people. We all are disobedient. We all, as Romans describes us, we were enemies of God. That we are slaves to our sin.

49:10

That the only option we've got is to continue to do the things that gratify us. But then God comes onto the scene. God steps in and God does some pretty incredible work in these verses, right? That God, that a good loving God reaches in and he comes in and he says no no no no no.

49:31

You used to be this way, but I got something for you, right? It's because of his grace that we can be forgiven, that we can be saved. There's a humbling truth in here that can be hard for us to hang on to and to remember sometimes, right?

49:53

It can be hard for us to remember as we are supposed to live these two things out. I think it reminds us of two key truths that we have to remember. This humbling reminder that you were not good enough on your own, but God stepped in and saved the day, right?

50:09

And the first thing is that as we have received an incredible blessing as recipients of God's undeserving kindness, undeserved kindness that he showed towards us, something that should fill our hearts with joy.

50:24

We didn't deserve it and God gave it to us anyways. That's good news. That's incredible news. Roman says as we were enemies of God, tells us that God demonstrates his love for us, sent Jesus to come and to die for us.

50:43

But it also reminds me that because God shows his loving kindness towards us, his grace towards us, it should create a humility in us and in that found humility that we are regularly reminded of. I was broken and God loved me.

51:01

Now it should give me an opportunity, a responsibility. It should stir something in me that I want to show that same kindness, that same graciousness that I've received. I need to go and I need to show it to other people.

51:13

That's how we do what he's talking about in the first two verses. It's how we submit to authorities. It's how we do good to all as we have opportunity. This passage, he talks about how we should model behavior before the outside world.

51:30

How this humility and the motivating grace that we see as God reached in and saved the day is going to enable us to do that. But then we see in verses 9 through 11, there's this final warning that Paul offers, that he offers to Titus and he extends to the church and to the rest of us in doing so.

51:50

Because through this whole passage, Paul's commands and Paul's calling to the church over these last few verses to remember how undeserving we were and to show the humble grace to those who we interact with that we're supposed to.

52:06

We've been reminded of these things, we've been commanded and told to do these things, but I think Paul knows how hard it's going to be for the church to continue to live those things out. He knows that we're prone to wander, as the famous song says, right?

52:19

We're prone to wander off and to get into our own thing and, well, I'm going to do it this way and I know what God's told me, but I got distracted, right? Paul knows how hard it's

going to be for us to persevere without getting knocked off track and that's why we've got this final warning, this final reminder in verses 9 through 11.

52:39

After he just talked about how we should be gracious towards others, he says in verse 9, avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

52:52

And as for the person who stirs up division after warning him once, warning him twice, he says have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful, he is self-condemned.

53:06

You know, the gospel from Paul that he was talking about in the previous, in just the last few verses, in verses 4 through 8, it was so weighty, so significant, really this idea has been a driving force through 1 Timothy and the letter that Paul wrote to Timothy that we studied a couple of months ago, it's been a driving force through this book of Titus that we've been studying over the last couple of months.

53:27

Paul is now just making it abundantly clear that no other priorities should creep into our churches, should creep into our ministries. He tells Titus, hey, avoid the divisive issues. That's what he's saying in verse 9, then in verse 10 he says, and by the way, avoid the divisive people as well.

53:45

Avoid divisive issues and avoid divisive people. Paul has told both, excuse me, Paul has told both Timothy and Titus to stand for the truth, to hold firm to the word of God. If there was an overarching theme of 1 Timothy and Titus and 2 Timothy that we're studying this year, I think the overarching theme is stand for the truth, defend the truth, hold tightly to the word of God.

54:13

I think Paul would tell us very clearly, there are some things that are worth fighting for. Stand for the gospel, make sure that the message of faith in Jesus, that salvation by faith alone, that that is not something that we compromise on.

54:27

That's an essential, we have to stand for that because if we water that down, it waters down the whole message. If you think that you can somehow work hard enough and earn God's favor on your own, that's not the same message.

54:41

That's not the same gospel. That's not the same way to heaven through God and through Jesus, our Savior. In fact, it's not salvation at all. It's just some man-made religion. There's some things that can, some arguments that can and should happen.

54:57

There's some things that are worth fighting for, but then there's a whole bunch of other things that I think Paul just describes here as foolish controversies. Paul continues to tell Titus to take this warning seriously, essentially saying, hey, make sure the church cuts it out.

55:14

We're not going to continue to have all these silly fights about all these silly things. We're not going to let the people in the church misbehave, run off and fight about all these different things.

55:26

You need to warn them. If they're running around stirring up foolish controversy, you should warn them once, right? Then it says they get another one, you should warn them

twice, and if they continue to persevere in whatever silly controversy they're wrapped up in, it's time to remove them from the church.

55:45

And that statement sounds kind of harsh, doesn't it? I think for many of us, we sit here and we go, well, that doesn't sound very loving. That doesn't sound like it would help anybody, right? But in this statement, Paul is reminding us of the biblical process and the need for church discipline.

55:58

We see that from Paul here in the book of Titus. We see it from Paul in first Timothy. We actually hear it from the mouth of Jesus himself in Matthew chapter 18, as it tells us to go and to confront sin, that we need to tell people and warn them when they're out of line with what God has said.

56:15

When their life looks different than what God has told them to do, it's our job as believers to go alongside of them and to lovingly tell them, hey, what you're doing here is not what God would have you to do.

56:29

We warn them, we warn them, we warn them. We go through this process that's laid out in scripture. As we warn them, if they continue to refuse, the Bible tells us, hey, we don't have the same relationship with them anymore.

56:43

It tells us that we remove them from the fellowship of the church, that we distance them. And as unloving as that sounds, there's two goals that are in church discipline that I think are really important for us to acknowledge here.

56:57

Because as we look at this, if we see this, we go, oh, that sounds ugly, I don't like that. But there's two main goals as Jesus laid this out for us. The first one is to protect the church from the dangerous influence of these foolish fights or these foolish fighters.

57:11

The second thing, the second reason why church discipline is important is to cause the unrepentant sinner to wake up and to realize the error of what it is that they're doing. Because the problem is that humans are hard -headed sometimes, right?

57:27

I know you're not hard -headed, but the rest of us are hard -headed, right? That we're a little difficult, we can be a little thick sometimes. We're a little slow to pick up on something. And so if somebody comes over and lovingly says, hey, I think you should do this differently, maybe we hear it, maybe we receive it, maybe we don't.

57:47

Somebody else comes along, hey, stop it. Maybe we receive it, maybe we don't. But if we let that Christian just continue to come to church and continue to have the benefits of what it means to be a part of the family of God and a part of the church of God, if we let them continue to have their cake and eat it too, right, you just go continue in this sin, and it's totally fine.

58:09

Hey, man, I know you're sleeping around and you're running out on your wife every weekend, and that's not okay, but just keep coming to church, it's fine, we'll be the good Christian guy on Sunday morning and then go do whatever you want the rest of the week.

58:24

If we act like that, if we look at people like that, if we allow that space for people to just go run around and do whatever they want, it's a dangerous space for us to live in, because you know what, that person is never probably, probably, they're never going to

forsake the sin that Jesus says so clearly is dangerous for them and they need to forsake because that path leads to destruction.

58:48

The most loving thing that we can do is to warn them and to say, hey, stop it. And sometimes that's with a loving hug and sometimes it's with a paddle, right? If anybody that's ever been a parent, sometimes we love our children by giving them a hug and telling them it's going to be okay and a band -aid and sometimes we love them with a paddle.

59:11

Sometimes we love them with some discipline, right? Both of those things can be true. So how can we discern between being someone who stands for the truth and fights for things that should be fought for and making sure that we're not someone who just loves foolish controversies?

59:31

I think there's a difference between needing to fight and loving to fight, right? There's a difference between someone who stands up for something that they need to fight for. Hey, we're not going to compromise on who Jesus is.

59:45

We're not going to compromise on the gospel. That one's worth fighting for and being someone who just loves fighting. You know anybody in your life that it seems like drama just seems to follow them around?

59:54

Seems like they're always fighting with somebody over something. They're mad at, somebody said, yeah, can you? Do you know what she said last week? Do you know what he did to me last week? There's some people that it just seems like they just love the fight, right?

01:00:11

They just love the drama. A divisive person loves to fight. But a person who loves peace and the purity of the church may be forced into division, but that's not their character. That's not someone who would be classified as, oh yeah, that person loves drama.

01:00:28

That person loves the fight, right? I think the warning for us here is we have to pray for the wisdom and the patience to be. to be patient, to be cautious before we jump in on any fight that we see an opportunity.

01:00:42

Hey, gloves are coming off, let's go, right? We shouldn't be people who look forward to a fight, but we also shouldn't be scared from one when there's something that needs to be defended. We need to pray for the wisdom and the guidance from Jesus to be patient at times, to be cautious about jumping in on those fights, but also to make sure that we stand for the truth and we stand for the right things when they need to be stood for.

01:01:09

As we hit the last few verses of this passage, we look at verses 12 through 15 and what Paul does, you know, Paul concludes his letter to Titus with some business, right? He tells Titus, hey, say hello to those who love us that are there in Crete.

01:01:22

Yeah, I'm gonna send Artemis, I'm gonna send Tychius there so that you can come visit me soon, but there's a key point here in verse 14 that I wanna make sure we don't miss because as Paul is wrapping up this whole letter, he's wrapping up this whole thing, he's even saying, you know, I'll send this guy and tell everybody hello, there's all this just kind of business stuff at the end of the letter, but there's a final point that he wants to make sure, hey, make sure they get this.

01:01:48

In verse 14, there's this key point that can summarize really the whole letter for us. He says, let our people learn to devote themselves to good works so as to help cases of urgent need and not to be unfruitful.

01:02:01

You know, that's a theme that's been kind of overarching through this whole letter to Titus. We see it multiple times in chapter one, we see it multiple times in chapter two, we see it now multiple times in chapter three.

01:02:14

This idea of good works, that we should be devoted to good works, that good works are the necessary fruit of our salvation. And to be without good works, to have no evidence of God at work in your life, to have no evidence of the fruit of your salvation is to be without salvation.

01:02:33

If you look around in your life and there's no evidence that God is at work in you, there is no patience for people, there is no love, there is no kindness, there is no gentleness, that none of this stuff shows up in your life, it's time for us to take a step back and go, whoa.

01:02:49

Maybe it's not a fruit tree, maybe that's not a fruit problem, maybe that's a tree problem. That's not just, well, I need to do better in this one little area. Hey, we gotta go back to the beginning, right?

01:03:03

We gotta make sure that you actually have the salvation that chapter three talks about. Good works do not cause salvation, but they are the fruit of salvation. We look at our passage this week, verse five, it tells us that God saved us, not because of the works that we have done, but because of his mercy.

01:03:30

He saved us, not because of us, but because of his mercy. We're saved by his mercy, we're saved by his grace, not our works, but it also continues in verse eight and he says that we are saved to good works.

01:03:45

Verse eight, I wanna insist on these things so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. I think if I were to ask each and every one of you in the room about your relationship with Jesus, about your faith, I think most of you would say that you have a relationship with Jesus.

01:04:06

There's a lot of Christians in the room, right? That's generally the makeup of church. I know maybe not everybody, but a lot of us would say, yeah, I know Jesus, I belong to Jesus. The book of Titus is telling us it's not just enough for us to say, yeah, I know Jesus.

01:04:21

It's not just about what we say. Our faith should be outwardly evident in our actions, that we should be devoting ourselves to good works if we truly belong to Jesus. So the application question for us is we wrap all this up.

01:04:37

I want you to pause and reflect whether it's now, whether it's on the way home, you could ask your spouse or your family, right? I'm sure they'd tell you the truth about this, but I want you to ask the question of yourself.

01:04:49

Do the actions of your life on a day in, day out basis, do they reflect a devotion to good works, like Paul's talking about here? Does the pattern of your life reflect a devotion to good works? Maybe that's hard for you to answer yourself.

01:05:09

Would your coworkers say that you have a devotion to good works? Do you have a reputation for being someone who loves doing the right thing or loves loving other people or being kind or generous or helpful?

01:05:21

Do you have that reputation at work or do you have maybe another reputation? What would your neighbors say? What would your family say? Do you have a reputation for good works? Because if we're living out what Paul's saying here, let our people learn to devote themselves to good works. It's not negotiable for us. It's not something that we try hard and muster. It's the evidence, the fact that God's at work in our lives.

01:05:58

And if there's no fruit, tells me that you might have a bigger problem. Might need to go back to the beginning and make sure that you know who Jesus is. That's the evaluation for you. That's I think the message that Paul would have us to consider this morning.

01:06:13

So our prayer team is gonna be down here at the end of the service. They would love to pray with you about whatever's going on in life. Talk with you about whatever's going on. I'm gonna be floating around back there in the back hallway.

01:06:22

I'd love to pray with you or talk with you as well. But in just a moment, we're gonna also take communion together. You notice the tables here at the front, there's a table back at the back as well. And as we prepare to take communion together, I wanna just take a moment and note a couple of important things about this.

01:06:39

Cause maybe this is super familiar to you and maybe this is brand new for you. But as we come to the Lord's table, as we come to this moment where we take communion together, the practice of communion is something that believers do.

01:06:53

This is a time for Christians. So if that's not you, I'd encourage you to refrain and to try to understand what it is that we're doing in these next few moments, but not to partake. But this time is for believers who have rested all their hope on the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

01:07:10

Because this symbolic meal, as we come and take together this small piece of bread and this small little cup of juice, it reminds us of the sacrifices Jesus allowed his body to be broken for us. As Jesus's blood was spilled out, as he gave his life on a criminal's cross, that he died the death that a common criminal would have received.

01:07:31

He gave his life as an innocent man. So the guilty ones like me and you could be forgiven. So if you're not a believer, I'd encourage you to refrain and to try to seek to understand, but also I'd encourage you as believers, for those of you that are Christians, I would encourage you to take a moment and just a minute and to examine your heart, to prepare yourself, to make sure that there's not any unconfessed sin, that there's not any broken relationship.

01:08:00

Make sure that you're right before God and before people, before you come and take these elements. If your heart's not right, I'd encourage you to stay in your seat and get that figured out.

01:08:11

Deal with the Lord, deal with that person. Maybe there's a conversation you need to have before you come and take, but I encourage you to work that out before you come. We've got tables with fresh elements that are here.

01:08:23

We've also got little prepackaged ones that are gluten -free and germ -free and all those things. So I'd encourage you to come and take, but before we do that, I want to read from Matthew 26 as we see Jesus in this first moment at the Last Supper, as he's installing this practice of communion that we're partaking of together this morning.

01:08:43

So after I read this and after I pray, I'd encourage you to reflect and to pray and then to come and to partake of the elements as you come and take them and return to your seat. Let's read from Matthew 26, verses 26 through 28, it says that as they were eating, Jesus took bread and after blessing it, he broke it and gave it to the disciples and he said, take and eat, this is my body.

01:09:06

And he took a cup and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them saying, drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Let's pray.

01:09:18

God, we thank you for your work in our lives. We thank you for Jesus's work at Calvary as he laid his life down, as he gave himself as a sacrifice so that we might be forgiven. God, we thank you for his sacrifice. We thank you for the opportunity to come before you and to know that we are forgiven, to know that Jesus's righteousness has been put onto our account because of his sacrifice at the cross. That we can be known, that we can be loved, that we can be adopted, that we can stand before you.

01:09:53

Know that you're our daddy because of what Jesus did. God, as we stop and as we reflect on his sacrifice, God, I pray that these small pieces of bread and small cups of juice, nothing inherently magical about these elements, but God, I pray that you would use these ordinary substances to do a miraculous work in our hearts.

01:10:20

God, that you would use these things to remind us of the goodness of how we have been loved and graciously forgiven, even though we were undeserving. God, the incredible gift that it is for us to know you.

01:10:35

God, I pray that you would use this moment to fill our hearts with joy. That you would remind us of the joy of our salvation. That you would remind us of the goodness of how we have been received into your family.

01:10:45

And God, that you would remind us of what an incredible gift it is to be called yours. So God, we thank you for Jesus. We thank you for his sacrifice. And it's through his sacrifice that we pray. And because of his sacrifice that we come and take with these elements.

01:11:00

But it's in Jesus's name that we pray, amen. Take and eat.