

TITUS

Chapter Three

Introduction

You will grow weary in your Christian walk. The writer to the Hebrew Christians described your weariness this way, in Hebrews 12:12-13,

Hebrews 12:12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees,
Hebrews 12:13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be *dislocated*, but rather be healed.

There will be times in your life when your "hands hang down..." They ought to be lifted up, in worship; they ought to be reaching out, in service... But in weariness they hang limp at your side.

There will be times when your "knees are feeble..." You ought to be on your knees, in prayer; you ought to be on your knees, washing the feet of others...But in weariness they are feeble.

There will be times when your "feet" seem "lame..." You should be walking with God in such a way as to bring good news to others...But your feet hurt from obstacles in the path of your pilgrimage.

The Apostle Paul understood that Christians would grow weary in their walk. That's why here in the last chapter of Titus he twice told the Christians on Crete to "maintain good works," in verses eight and fourteen:

Titus 3:8 ...those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.

Titus 3:14 And let our *people* also learn to maintain good works, to *meet* urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

Don't grow weary - maintain good works! Paul also explained his reasoning: #1 Maintain Good Works So You Can Better Evangelize The Unbelievers In Your City, and #2 Maintain Good Works So You Can Better Edify The Believers In Your Church.

#1 Maintain Good Works So You Can Better

Evangelize The Unbelievers In Your City (v1-8)

You can grow weary in your walk because of the company you must keep in the world. Take the Cretans as an example:

In 1:12 you learned that, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."

In 3:3 you see that the average unbelieving Cretan was "...foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another..."

These were the unbelievers that the Christians on Crete had for company in their walk through the world. Those kind of people tend to weary you.

While that is to be expected, it is also to be overcome! Paul reminded the believers "...we ourselves were also..." *just like them* - until we encountered the Risen Savior, Jesus Christ! The theme of verses one through eight is that you should be careful to maintain good works among these people because God wants to reveal Himself to them, too. Your good works help to evangelize them.

Titus 3:1 Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work,

Christians were looked upon with suspicion in the old Roman Empire. Slaves and free citizens met together; often the slave would be over the master in his position in the Church. The Christians spoke of the body and the blood of Jesus Christ and were often accused of cannibalism. Thus it was important for them to be good, model citizens.

Paul told Titus "remind them..." Either they already had received this instruction about earthly citizenship, or they could easily recognize it as consistent with the Gospel message.

"...Be subject to rulers and authorities..." means exactly what it says. You are to obey the civil laws unless the civil laws violate God's law. Then you are to disobey obediently! As one commentator put it, you are to always submit yourself to the civil rulers and authorities even if it means submitting unto death at their hands.

"...Be ready for every good work..." Cooperate in those matters that involve the whole community. Be a good citizen.

Titus 3:2 to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.

Paul moved from talking about civil authorities to average unbelieving citizens.

Even though the unbelievers you are among are wicked, don't you "speak evil" of them...

Even though the unbelievers you are among are contentious, you are to be "peaceable..."

Even though the unbelievers you are among are harsh and cruel, you are to be "gentle..."

Even though the unbelievers you are among are proud, you are to respond in "humility..."

To encourage them in these behaviors Paul reminded the believers on Crete that they were recently just like their fellow citizens -

Titus 3:3 For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

When they were unbelievers, the Christians on Crete were no different than their unbelieving neighbors. The point is that the unbelievers could do nothing about it! To expect unbelievers to act any differently is like expecting a blind man to see, a deaf man to hear, or a lame man to walk. It is amazing that unbelievers aren't *worse* than they are! You should expect them to act the way that they do rather than grow weary among them.

If men are to change, they must be changed by an encounter with the Living God, Jesus Christ:

Titus 3:4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,
Titus 3:5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,
Titus 3:6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,
Titus 3:7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Paul reminded the believers of what had happened to them to change them. God had intervened in their lives! This is described in terms of God's past, present, and future plan for mankind.

Verse four speaks of the *past*...

Titus 3:4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,

The verse implies that God had long promised to show "kindness" and "love" toward lost mankind. From eternity past, to the Garden of Eden, and throughout God's revelation of Himself through the prophets, He promised to show kindness and love towards all mankind by providing a way of salvation.

That way is really a Person, "God our Savior," Jesus Christ, Who "appeared." God became man in Jesus Christ! He "appeared" in His incarnation, His sinless life, His substitutionary death on the Cross, His resurrection from the dead, and His ascension into heaven. Jesus is "the kindness and love of God our Savior toward" the whole human race!

Verses five and six speak of the *present*...

Titus 3:5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

Titus 3:6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior...

Titus 3:7 ...having been justified by His grace...

What God has promised in the past becomes yours in the present when you trust Jesus Christ alone for salvation. In verse eight you see the element of faith: "...those who have believed in God..." You are saved by personal faith in Jesus, not by your "works of righteousness which [you] have done..." It is in "mercy," which means God doesn't give you what you deserve. Instead He,

"...[saves you] through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

When you believed on Jesus, you were saved. God the Holy Spirit had been with you, drawing you to Jesus. Then He came in you and upon you. Paul uses four metaphors to describe your new relationship with God through the Holy Spirit: Regeneration, Renewing, Poured-Out, and Justified.

Regeneration means that you were brought from spiritual death to spiritual life. You were dead in trespasses and sins, but were made alive by God the Holy Spirit. You were born of God, born-again.

Renewing speaks of the new nature you are given by the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit. You become a new creation in Jesus; old things pass away and all things become new.

Justified is a legal term, borrowed from the courtroom. It was so important to Paul that it took him six chapters in the Book of Romans to discuss and describe it. Justification is the gracious act of God whereby He declares a believing sinner righteous because of the finished work of Jesus on the Cross. God puts to your account the righteousness of Jesus Christ. An easy way to understand justified is to say that it is "just-as-if-I'd" never sinned at all.

Poured-out speaks of the power and presence of God the Holy Spirit that is available to you as you walk with the Lord. Life in the Spirit begins at conversion when He is poured-out upon you. At the same time your experience with God the Holy Spirit is both dynamic and renewable. Paul in his writings frequently implies that there are further, ongoing appropriations of the Spirit's empowering presence.

Verse seven speaks of the *future*...

Titus 3:7 ...we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Your salvation looks forward to its final consummation in the future.

Since you are a person who has been changed by the power of God, you should walk among others with a passion to see *them* changed by Him as well. That's why Paul said,

Titus 3:8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.

When you maintain your good works, not growing weary, your witness and testimony "are good and profitable" to unbelievers. Your good works attract them to Jesus and become a basis for evangelizing.

Maintain good works so you can better evangelize the unbelievers in your city!

Likewise, you are to...

#2 Maintain Good Works So You Can Better Edify The Believers In Your Church (v9-15)

You can grow weary in your walk among believers in the Church! Take the Christians on Crete as an example. Even though they had a vibrant, growing, dynamic Church fellowship - there were those among them who would make you weary:

Titus 1:10 For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision,

Titus 1:11 whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain...

Titus 1:16 ...They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

These were some of the people in the Church who the Christians had to deal with. While such persons are to be expected, your weariness with them is to be overcome! In verses nine through fifteen Paul instructed Titus and the Church on Crete how to minister to problem people and how to go on ministering to steadfast saints.

Problem People...

Titus 3:9 But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless.

Warren Wiersbe says, "We wish we did not have problem people in our Churches; but wherever you have people, there can be problems."¹ The problem people on Crete were those who wanted to argue about the nonessential points of "the law." They were involved in and were promoting "disputes" regarding the interpretation of "genealogies" and finer points of Jewish "law." They were "contentious," arguing with others, believing that their position was the only truly Christian position. And they were "striving" to convince others they, and they alone, were right. Paul called this kind of behavior "unprofitable and useless."

¹Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, p. 268.

One important reason it was "unprofitable and useless" is suggested from the overall context of Chapter Three. There were people on Crete who needed to hear the Gospel and be saved! The believers needed to be edifying one another rather than tearing down one another, so that each would be strengthened to minister God's grace to unbelievers.

Another kind of "problem person" is discussed in verses ten and eleven:

Titus 3:10 Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition,
Titus 3:11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.

"Divisive" is translated "heretic" in the KJV. The word means "one who makes a choice, a person who causes division."² According to Greek scholar Gordon Fee,

"Because the adjective *hairetikon* (divisive) in later times came to be used of those who held false doctrines...the KJV...translated it *heretic*. But that is to read later ideas back into the text. The context...makes it clear that the problem is with these people's behavior, not their [beliefs]..."³

The person described in verse nine was a problem because of his or her *beliefs*; the person described in verses ten and eleven was a problem because of his or her *behavior*. Pastor Warren Wiersbe describes such a person this way:

"This is a...person who thinks he [or she] is right, and who goes from person to person in the church, forcing people to make a choice."⁴

This person is a problem because he or she behaves in such a way as to cause division in the Church. The Apostle Paul told us,

1 Corinthians 11:19 For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.

This kind of thing is to be expected, but not encouraged. Paul told Titus to "reject" such a person after two "admonitions," or *warnings*. The person is to be warned twice that their behavior is divisive. If they persist they are to be rejected. The indication in the context is

²Ibid., p. 268.

³Gordon Fee, *1&2 Timothy, Titus*, p. 211.

⁴Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, p. 268.

that this would be two personal warnings followed by a public warning.

This is a loving response! The problem person is approached in love and is given ample warning. If they persist, love for the whole fellowship is shown by rejecting the one person who would otherwise cause many to stumble and sin. To encourage Titus in this difficult ministry, Paul told him that the divisive person brings this upon him or her self -

Titus 3:11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.

"Warped" means that the person "is in a state of being completely disoriented from the truth."⁵ They put their own slant on the truth. They are "sinning" by causing or seeking to cause division, and thus bring discipline upon themselves.

Such problem people weary you in your walk...but you are to maintain your good works for the sake of God's steadfast saints!

Steadfast Saints...

Paul closed his letter to Titus by mentioning certain administrative matters and the faithful saints who would be involved in them.

Titus 3:12 When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.

Titus 3:13 Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing.

Paul named four men, five if you include Titus, whom he could count on to be available to minister to God's saints. They were men who had been called by God into ministries that would edify and build-up the various fellowships they were sent to. They had no problem submitting to Paul's authority as an apostle, and Paul had no problem submitting to God's will for them - waiting for direction through prayer and the study of the Scriptures.

God gives men to build-up His Church:

⁵*The Complete Biblical Library*, Greek-English Dictionary, Volume Delta-Epsilon, p. 358.

Ephesians 4:11 And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,
Ephesians 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

Gifted men are to *equip* and *edify* God's saints as they maintain their good works.

Titus 3:14 And let our *people* also learn to maintain good works, to *meet* urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

While there are certain gifted men, *every* believing man and woman in the Church has a gift or gifts through which they, too, are to equip and edify God's saints. Together we are to "maintain good works" and "meet urgent needs." The Church was to have regular, ongoing ministries, as well as be flexible enough to meet other needs brought to their attention by God the Holy Spirit.

In so doing, we will "not be unfruitful." A fruit tree that fails to produce is a discouragement to the husbandman. You and I are to bring forth fruit, some tenfold, some one hundred fold. As you maintain good works fruit abounds to your account!

Titus 3:15 All who *are* with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace *be* with you all. Amen.

Greetings and *grace* closed out Paul's letter to Titus.

Conclusion

Good works do not save you. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit..." (Titus 3:5).

Good works should characterize your life:

Titus was to be a *model* of good works:

Titus 2:7 in all things showing yourself *to be* a pattern of good works...

The people were to *manifest* good works:

Titus 2:14 [Jesus] gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.

Together they were to *maintain* good works:

Titus 3:8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men...

Titus 3:14 ...And let our *people* also learn to maintain good works, to *meet* urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

Myself and the other men in leadership are to be *models* of good works. Towards that end I would ask of you what Paul asked of the Thessalonians: "Brethren, pray for us" (1 Thessalonians 5:25).

You are to *manifest* good works. Towards that end I would remind you of what Paul said in Ephesians 2:10,

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Together we are to *maintain* good works. Hebrews 10:24 says, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works..."

Let us maintain good works, so that we might better *edify* the believers in our Church, and so that we might better *evangelize* the unbelievers in our city.