

Group Study Outline

Titus 3 Theme Sentence

Teachers should insist on God's grace in saving and transforming people, so that Christians devote themselves to good works.

Launch Question

What makes a 'good' sermon? What do we want from a Bible study? Why?

READ TITUS 3

What does Titus need to remind people to do? Give an example for each instruction in 1-2.

Why should we be reminded to behave this way? (3)

Who is being described in 3?

How are they/we being described?

Is it a fair assessment? Would you have described yourself like this?

What *should* have been God's response to us?

What *was* His response?

4-7 are jam-packed with amazing truths about our salvation! Walk through the verses, unpacking the picture we get...

What appeared? What did God do? Why *didn't* He do that? Why *did* He? How did He do it? What's regeneration? What's renewal? How are we given the Holy Spirit? Why are we given the Spirit? How are we justified? What do we become? etc.

Can you summarise "the trustworthy saying" we've just picked apart?

In what way do we contribute to our salvation?

Looking at our salvation like this, how does it make you feel?

What does 8 say should be our response to it?

How does the Holy Spirit make this response possible?

In what way do the comings and goings of 12-14 give us an example of what being devoted to good works might look like?

Are there any "cases of urgent need" which we could help with?

What needs to be avoided?

What does bad teaching look like and lead to?

How do we normally respond to divisive people? Why?

How *should* we respond to them? Why is this so important?

How does this fit with Titus' job in Crete? (1:5, 9, 11, 13)

What is the answer to the false teachers of 1:12 saying that Cretans are just bad people and they'll never change?

Summary & application

How might 8 be a good summary of the message of Titus?

Going back to our launch question, what should we want from Bible teaching?

What if we've heard it all before?

So what should Connect Groups be like?

What is the most important truth that you've learnt from Titus?

What can we learn from Titus as a church?

In which areas of your life have you been challenged or encouraged from Titus?

PRAY

Titus 3



Remember, remember

If we've been Christians for a while, it's easy to feel like we've heard it all before. It's hard to see that Jesus' death for us is good news when it's no longer news. And as for how we should behave... we all know that! It would be much more interesting to have a theological debate over something controversial or to focus on something else for a while.

This is a constant temptation, but in chapter 3, Titus is told to "remind them" of the proper behaviour for Christians and to "insist on" the gospel message. There will be some who'd rather have an argument, or focus on rules and techniques for godliness, or else go easy on godliness altogether. That is deadly. People and teaching like that need to be avoided.

What needs to be promoted instead is the clear and simple gospel – God has been good to us in saving us through Jesus despite our sin, and gives us His Spirit to transform our lives. Church leaders must never let people forget this.

Problem solved

Our ultimate problem is that we are slaves to sin and can neither stop it nor make it up to God who should punish us. God solves this problem by His grace. He freely forgives us because Jesus died, saving us from judgement. This same grace also trains us to live godly lives now while we wait for this salvation.

Titus' problem in Crete was a culture of sin in the world around, which was creeping into the church through false teachers excusing sin and teaching manmade rules. The solution to this problem is the same: God's grace. Replacing ungodly liars with godly elders who teach grace will restore order. But the key is not the elders themselves, but the message they bring: grace. The gospel isn't just theory, it is the means by which God takes sinful people (not just people in general, but specific troublemakers in our churches) and turns them around.

Sin is the problem. (i.e. we are the problem!) Grace is the solution. God saves us, so we should teach that and only that. Over and over and over. Until Christ returns and all our problems are solved.

[NB]

Titus 3 Theme Sentence

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Application

- Understand that salvation is because of God's mercy, not our goodness. And that part of salvation is being made new alive people.
- Be careful to devote yourself to good works.
- Stick with this kind of teaching and avoid unhelpful, divisive teaching.

Commentary

- 1-2 This chapter is a continuation from chapter 2, telling various groups what godliness looks like because of the gospel. Here, he's addressing all Christians. Given that 2:15 has spoken of Titus' authority in the church and the need for people not to dismiss him, the "rulers and authorities" in 3:1 must begin with those in the church. But this is a general command as well, to submit to all legitimate authority. This is a theme in Titus, that the gospel brings out of control people back into line. Obedience as well is a general command. Our default attitude shouldn't be rebellion but humble compliance, towards God and others. Readiness for good works, rather than neglect of them, is another key theme. 2 is more focused on relationships, avoiding arguments and being respectful to all, not just to those in authority. Titus is to remind them to behave this way.
- 3 The "for" at the start shows that this is the reason why they should be reminded to behave this way. It's because of the change that God has brought about. Paul "reminds" Titus how we used to be before Christ came to us. This is a harsh but fair assessment of all without Jesus. Note that these characteristics are very similar to those of the false teachers in chapter 1 and your average Cretan (1:12). The natural outcome of this is surely death and judgement but...
- 4-7 We were dreadful sinners, but then God "appeared" (cf 2:11). We were not saved because we were righteous (3 proves that!), but because God is merciful. We contribute nothing to our salvation except our need for it. He saved us by "regeneration" – bringing spiritually dead people to life – and "renewal" – making us new. The Spirit who does this is generously given to us through Jesus. We not only get justified (declared righteous) but are guaranteed eternal life to come. This is a wonderful change of events from 3! Praise God!
- This section is one of the most detailed descriptions of how we are saved in the New Testament. So far in Titus, we've just been told that truth fits with godliness (1:1; 2:1), then that grace trains us for godliness (2:11, 14). But this finally shows us how and why that happens. The sacrifice which makes salvation possible is an event which has happened outside of us on the cross, but the application of that salvation to individuals is a spiritual work going on inside us by the Holy Spirit. We are not just shown how or why to change, we are changed! So of course the false teachers are wrong that you can carry on being an evil beast! We're not just forgiven, we're transformed. This is the solution to the problem in Crete.
- It makes sense of 2:12, where the training of grace seems to be about what we love, our passions. We don't simply get told that we should be different because of what God has done for us; we are new people with new desires alongside our old sinful ones.
- 8 But this life transformation isn't automatic. We still need Bible teachers like Titus and his soon-to-be-appointed elders. They must explain the gospel in these terms so people understand why good works are essential following conversion. And they must "remind" people to

behave that way. If Titus insists on "these things" then that will encourage believers to dedicate themselves to being godly.

Another sign that this transformation isn't just happening despite us, is that Christians need to "be careful to devote themselves to good works." We don't just do them, or devote ourselves to them, but are *careful* to devote ourselves to them. Planning, preparation and perseverance are required. Again, this is a million miles away from the false teachers who taught that a bit of law was the way to go rather than grace, and that personal holiness didn't really matter either. The gospel of grace both saves and transforms us.

- 9-11 Unlike "these things" mentioned above which are "excellent and profitable", there is another type of teaching which is "unprofitable and worthless". Titus should avoid this like the plague. Qualities of false teaching include a focus on unimportant details rather than the central gospel message, and the outcome of division rather than peace.

Since division is the result of false teaching, "a person who stirs up division" must refer to these false teachers. The way to deal with them is implementing Jesus' three-strikes-and-you're-out policy from Matthew 18:15-17. To be "warped" is a building metaphor, relating to a wall which is so out of line and structurally unsound as to be beyond repair. Having said that, 3 gives us hope that even the worst person can be changed and 1:13 implies that some false teachers will become "sound in the faith" once they are sharply rebuked. Putting them out of the church should be a last resort after the gospel has been offered and the required change has been explained, and after both have been firmly rejected. To protect the church from false teaching, sometimes false teachers need to be shut up (1:11) and put out of harms way.

- 12-14 Titus was left in Crete with the task of appointing elders (1:5). Here we see Paul making arrangements for when this task is complete. He will send a replacement for the next part of the job in Crete, and when they come Titus should meet up with Paul for the winter. No doubt Paul is mentioning the new people's names so as to give them his seal of approval for when they come, since this letter must have been intended to be read out to the church, even though it's addressed to Titus.

Just as false teaching needs to be avoided by silencing false teachers, so too good teaching is promoted by supporting good teachers. Zenas and Apollos probably delivered this letter and they are moving on afterwards with more ministry to do. Paul gives the church in Crete an opportunity to practise what they're learning about good works, by telling them to financially support these workers. This will be a good lesson for them in bring "fruitful". These are the kinds of opportunities to look for when being careful to devote yourself to good works.

- 15 After some personal greetings, Paul can't help but let grace have the last word! This whole letter is about God's grace; His extravagant generosity to sinners in sending Jesus to give Himself for our sins, and sending His Spirit to make us alive and ready for good works. It's grace which saves and changes people, so grace and its implications must be taught and modelled. That is the key for healthy churches.