

Well, let's take our Bibles and turn to Titus chapter three, verse 12, and you may stand as we read God's word. This is the end of our series on Titus, believe it or not, Doing Good, and we're coming to look at verses 12 through 15, kind of Paul's final messages, along with a farewell. Sometimes we come to this kind of passage and go, "Okay. That's interesting, but not so interesting," and we kind of move on. But there's more here than you think, and hopefully I'll make that clear.

Titus three, verses 12 to 15, wrapping up our series. Follow along. 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. Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing, and let our people also learn to maintain good works to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful. All who are with me greet you, greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen. So, you may be seated.

Message is entitled Last, But Not Least, Titus three, verses 12 to 15. Roy tells the story of a preacher in the South who always preached on the subject of believer's baptism and immersion by water. In fact, this was the one string on his bow. He beat that subject to death to a point where his people were just tired of it. They wanted a change. They wanted him to change channels, change his tune. So, some of the deacons plucked up enough courage, they challenged the pastor. "Hey, we agree, believer's baptism, immersion by water, but preach the whole counsel of God. Go somewhere else. Do something else." In fact, they said, "You know what? Maybe the safest bet, just to change channels, would be why don't you start a series on the book of Genesis?"

The pastor agreed, and so the next week he started a series on the book of Genesis, Genesis one, verse one. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. He said, "You know what? When God made the earth, he made it one quarter land and three quarters water, which brings me back to the subject of baptism." That's kind of funny, but it's also the fact, as we come to Titus chapter three, verses 12 to 15, Paul, like the preacher in the South, returns to his favorite theme, good works. Before he's done, verse 14, he will say what he has said many times over in this letter. "Let our people also learn to maintain good works and meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful."

That's a drum that he has beat throughout this letter. Paul understands, when it comes to either sermons or literature, a good conclusion often restates what has been important throughout the correspondence or the communication, and that's certainly the case here. So, here we are. Paul's concluding the letter to Titus. We're kind of back to where we started. That's why we called the series Doing Good, because throughout Titus, they are told to do good, but alongside this, in classical conclusion style, Paul adds some special instructions to some special people, and then he finishes with a gracious farewell.

Now, let's be honest. If you're reading the book of Titus in your devotions, and you get to this last paragraph or last pericope, you tend to go, "That's interesting. Amen," and move on, and we tend to overlook what's in a passage like this. In fact, I'll admit myself, when I come to a passage like this at the end of the series, I go, "Man, what am I going to bring out of this? It's a travel log. It's a bunch of names, and it's kind of goodbye," but there's a lot here. Last but not least, there's three things I saw, gospel strategy, gospel service, gospel sentiment. Don't miss this. It's good stuff. Keep your Bible open. Follow along.

Look at the emphasis on gospel strategy, verses 12 and 13. "When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me in Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Send Zenas the

lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing." So, here we have a report on the goings on and movement of some of Paul's missionary team. He speaks to the fact that either Artemis or Tychicus will come to Crete and release and replace Titus, who will then go and join Paul, who has an intention of going to Nicopolis for the winter.

On top of that, he introduces us to the only lawyer we know in the New Testament, a man called Zenas, and then he introduces us to Apollos, who we know from Acts 18, who was an eloquent man and was mighty in the scriptures, who was discipled to another level of competency by Priscilla and Aquila, and these two guys, they have been in Crete, on Crete, probably brought the letter from Paul to Titus. Now that their job's done, maybe they stayed around there for some ministry. They're on the move, and Paul says, "Hey, I want you to fill their saddlebags to the full, and send them on their way lacking nothing."

So, you could just stop there. It would easily be, "That's interesting." You've got the moving parts within Paul's program of missions and ministry, but it's more there. Number one, I want you to see the need for fellowship. As you and I as a church, at a macro and micro level, continue to strategize as to how a Kindred Community Church, through missions and radio and local church ministry, can impact the world for Jesus Christ, here's some elements of strategy, the need for fellowship, simply put. We need to lock arms and join hearts in loving people to the cross and to Jesus Christ. We need to band together as brothers and sisters to help advance the gospel, because that's what's clear here.

Did you notice how many people are mentioned? Now, we could spend time telling you about them. I'm actually not going to do that. The implication is they are significant saints of God. They are faithful servants of God. They are friends of Paul. Look at the names. Titus is spoken to. "Hey, come join me in Nicopolis." Artemas, Tychicus, Zenas the lawyer, Apollos. Did you notice verse 14 our people? That's all the saints on Crete. All with me, verse 15, that's all the people with Paul he doesn't mention, and then he speaks about those who love us in the faith, those Christians on Crete that not only know Paul, but they actually love him in a very practical manner that Paul is very much aware of. You get the point. There's a ton of people here.

Paul has a need for fellowship. As great and substantial a character as the Apostle Paul was, he was not a one-man band. He was not an apostolic tornado. He needed help. He needed hospitality. He needed friendship. He needed money. He needed leadership options. He needed to maintain his priorities with the help of others. He needed others to burden share. He needed others to maximize his productivity. It's all there. He's not a lone ranger. In fact, when you go to his letters and go to the end of them, like I Corinthians 16, Romans 16, Titus three, and you add it all together, he specifically by name mentions over a hundred people.

So, next time you read something on the life of the great Apostle Paul, a church statesman, a world shaker, a missionary, par excellence, a writer of the greatest number of books in the New Testament, you don't see him standing there by himself, some solitary figure, some one-man band, some apostolic tornado. There is a ton of people behind him that are praying, giving, offering him hospitality, supporting him, loving him. You get the point. Paul understood that life in ministry is a team sport. His bench was deep. His team was united and valued. You see it all in these verses.

It's a very simple thought. It's like Philippians one where we're told, hey, Paul says to the church there, "You know, be like one man with one mind, striving together for the furtherance of the gospel." Let's all sign up to that today afresh, and even as we talk about the next chapter in our business meeting, in the life of kindred community, now we need to join hearts and hands, moving into a new chapter and life of

this church, because together we can do more. God's brought us together. You're here on purpose. You have a ministry to fulfill. You have prayers to give. You have ways of supporting this ministry. You're critical to its life. Let's join our hands.

As I thought about that idea, and just the simple thought of Paul's need for fellowship, and how a church working together is the greatest force for good on Planet Earth when they are underwritten by the power of the Holy Spirit, I remembered John MacArthur telling a story that comes out of Kansas, a tragic story about a mother who lived on a quite large farm. It was a really hot day. The corn was standing tall in the fields for several miles, and she lost sight of her little boy. He got out into the cornfield on a blistering hot day, and she got frantic and called her husband from where he was working, and both of them fanned out and spent several hours trying to find the little boy, but it was fruitless.

Then they come back. They kind of reorganize, refocus. They call their neighbors who started arriving in pickup trucks by the dozens, and they started fanning out for a few more hours, but nobody found the little boy. Then they were brought back, and they refocused and reorganized and decided that they needed to stand in a line, hold each other's hands, and go through that cornfield like a wave, and eventually the little boy was found, but it was too late. The sun had just drawn the life from him.

The next day, when the paper told that story, the mother said this. "Oh, God, if only we had joined our hands sooner." Look, I'm thankful for what you do. I know you're thankful for what I'm doing, but you know what excites me more? What we do together as a church. May we fear that kind of idea, oh, God, if only we had adjoined our hands sooner. The sun's setting, my friends. There's stuff to be done for Jesus Christ. There's the need for fellowship. Secondly, there's the need for forecasting. I love this.

Paul's like a master chess player. I think Beth and I watched a movie recently about... I think it was called something like Finding Bobby Fischer, and it was about the life of Bobby Fischer, but it was kind of tied around a young protégé in the chess world. It's a fascinating movie, actually very, very entertaining. Then when you watch a movie like that, you realize that the master chess players, not you and me fiddling around the edges of the chess world, they're thinking 10 and 12 moves ahead. When their opponent moves, it's like a Rolodex starts just turning, and they've got, "I can go here, there, and the other thing."

Paul's doing that, isn't he? He's thinking two, three moves ahead. There's a lot of moving pieces here, a lot of planning that's going on, a lot of forecasting. Okay? Here's where I'm at, but if we do this and do that, here's where we might land. So, he says, "Hey, Titus, you're done on Crete. You're going to come and join me in Nicopolis on the coast for the winter. I'm not sure yet, but either Artemas or Tychicus is coming to replace you." Most commentators would think that Artemas was sent, not Tychicus, because in II Timothy four, Paul sends Tychicus somewhere else. There's just a lot of moving parts.

You've got Zenas and Apollos who have come with the correspondence. Now, their next job is to, hey, you're moving on. The location is undisclosed, but the church, as we said, is to fill their saddlebags and get them moving. Just the point is this. Not only a need for fellowship, there's a dozen names here, and people mentioned. There's a need for forecasting. What can we do next to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandment? That's where a church ought to be. That's where a leadership ought to live. That's what deacons need to support. That's what congregations need to congregate around. What are we going to do next for Jesus Christ? Who can we move? Who can we bring? Who can we send to move the sticks? I love it. I love it.

That's why I love this statement by David Livingstone. "Lord, I'll go anywhere, so long as it's forward," or David Brainerd, "Lord, help me not to loiter on my way to heaven." There's no loitering here, is there? Paul's sitting there like a master chess player, "Okay, what's the next move to advance the gospel?" Hey, if you've got six-year-olds, seven-year-olds, eight-year-olds over there, what's your next move to impact those kids for Christ? What level of excellence can you get to beyond where you're at? What are you missing? What are you not doing? Same for our church. Same for Living Waters. Same for KTT. Same for our missionaries.

I just spent, as you know, a week with Fred Whitman. 45 years in Italy. I can tell you, in between the Catacombs and the Colosseum, in the car and driving, all he talked about was the next move, what he's hoping still to achieve for Jesus Christ in Italy. That's the spirit, and it's here. It's here. I remember Dan [Assissman 00:14:13] saying something one day that stuck with me about young boys that he had trained in the gym and physically. He says this. "Boys ask, 'Our we done?' Men ask, 'What's next?'" It's a great statement. Men asked, "What's next?" Women asked, "What's next?" You know what I mean by that. Are we done? Can we take a break? Is it over? That was too tough. What's next?

In fact, let me move on from that, staying on this thought. This forecasting, look at verse 13. "Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing." That phrase is interesting, that they may lack nothing. Go back to Titus one, verse five. "For this reason, I left you in Crete, that you should set an order to things that are lacking and appoint elders in every city." Paul left Titus there to fill in the gaps, and here's an element of that. Hey, Apollos and Zenas has come. They give you the letter. Maybe they've ministered there for a while. I've got something else for them to do.

Now, here's the practical little point, just talking about forecasting, things to do, what's next. There's at least an emphasis here on this, that the churches on Crete were to give to the goers, give to the goers. That's just an interesting thought. I stole that phrase from some book I was reading this week where it just said, of verse 13, that a church that's mobilized for Jesus Christ and making an impact for eternity will give to the goers, will get behind who is on the move or what is on the move for Jesus Christ.

Look, the most of us will not be itinerant evangelists. The most of us won't have global reach through our marriages or through our ministry. Most of us will have some settled situation where we're raising a family in a community, and for the most part with some kind of steady income. If that's your situation, one of the things you can be doing next for the kingdom is giving to the goers. That's why we encourage you to give to KTT, because it's going all over the world. That's why we support Fred Whitman in Italy, and people in Mexico, and Daniel in India. We're giving to the goers, and that's a wonderful privilege. That's a beautiful thing for you to be able to do. It's a spiritual thing where you support gospel to that end.

I mean, look at Act 15, verse three. Paul will speak about this on a couple of occasions, speaking about Barnabas and Paul being sent by the church in Antioch. He says, "So being sent on their way by the church, they pass through Phoenicia and Samaria." That's a phrase that speaks of the New Testament church supporting its pastors, its missionaries, its evangelists, its global movers and shakers. They send them on their way, and it's not just with a wave and a hollow goodbye. It's with money and with prayer, and it's standing behind them.

If you want to get a window into this, you could look at I Corinthians 16, verse six, write it down, but I want to go to III John, verses five through eight. It gives you a window into the New Testament world. "Listen, beloved. You do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren, for strangers who have bourne

witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, that you will do we because they were sent forth for His namesake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such that we may become fellow workers." Love that.

I'll tell you all, this is the kind of church this is. When people come and preach here, or people come and leave support here, if we get behind them, we send them away well. This is a generous church. I tip my hat to the elders, and to you for your generosity, and we want to continue to be... That's one of our ministries. When we are blessed by a visiting speaker, one of God's servants, or we get behind a missionary couple or a missionary single, let's serve them well. Let's give to them as generously as we can. I'll tell you what, if God raises up young men and marriages in our church that are doing the pastoral ministry somewhere in this country and somewhere across the world, we need to treat them well, stand behind them. That's what's going on here. It's beautiful.

I'll say this to the credit of my father, who I believe is an honorable man, a blue-collar man. He just lives in the same little pokey house that he's lived in for over 60 years. But one thing I remember about my father, and I saw it, not that he blew his trumpet, I just saw it, and I knew it, he often hosted preachers because he was a deacon, and the tradition in Northern Ireland was that deacons housed visiting speakers, and I know my father always gave the visiting speaker an envelope. Didn't have much, blue-collar factory worker, but he gave to God's servants and sent them on their way well. That's a good thing. Give to the goers. Stand behind God's men and women. That's what you've got here, and it's a beautiful thing.

That's why one of the commentators says this, "Our fruitful service may be found in helping others bear fruit." Now, we'll get to this in a moment. In verse 14, Paul says, "I don't want you to be unfruitful, and one of the ways you can bear fruit is to financially support others who are bearing fruit." It's a beautiful thought. Wasn't it William Carey who said as he left England for India, "I will go down into the goldmine of India, but you need to hold the ropes"? That's where we're at here, not only a need for fellowship, not only a need for forecasting, finally a need for flexibility.

Don't you love God's word? I mean, I will admit it. When I come to some of these lists, I go, "Man, what am I going to do with this? How do I drive this towards Monday morning for our people?" Amazing. In these names, you have the reminder that life and ministry is a team sport. No lone rangers in gospel enterprises. Amazing that, you know what, Paul is moving people, and we need to be constantly thinking about what's next, not sitting on our hands, not resting on our laurels, not watching reruns of what we have done for the last 10 years for Jesus Christ. What's important is what we're going to do next for Jesus Christ over 10 years, and that flexibility, because while Paul forecasts some of this, not all of it works out. So, you always have to have the need for flexibility in God's work.

Here's the example I'll use, just Titus and Paul. What does he say? "Hey, I'm either going to send Artemas or Tychicus to you. They'll relieve you. Then you can leave Crete," verse 12, "and I've decided I'm going to spend the winter in Nicopolis," which was on a kind of coast, southern part of Greece, "and I want you to join me." We don't think that ever happened. It was an intention. It was good intention, but we're not sure it happened because we believe in between the writing of this and the writing of II Timothy, Paul got arrested. We're not sure if he ever got to Nicopolis, and if he did, he wasn't there for long because he gets arrested, according to II Timothy four, and we know that's the imprisonment from which he doesn't get released, and that's why he writes in II Timothy, "Hey, the time of my departure is at hand."

In that letter in chapter four, he addresses Titus, and addresses Tychicus, I believe. Let me go to that. I think it's II Timothy four, verse 10, where Paul says this. Titus for Dalmatia, and then in verse 12, "Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus." That's why we believe Tychicus never came to Crete. Artemas did, because he was sent to Ephesus. Titus, in Paul's last correspondence, was sent to Dalmatia. So, it seems that he may have got to Nicopolis, and if he did, he was soon arrested, carted off to Rome, martyred. He may not have even got there, and here's the theory.

Read II Timothy 4:21 where he says, "Do your utmost to come before winter." So, in his letter to Titus, he says, "I'm going to spend winter in Nicopolis. You come and join me," but now he's in Rome spending the winter. So, you can follow that. He either got there and was immediately arrested, or he never got there. Point is, I don't want to get lost, flexibility. It's a bit like Acts 16. Paul has faced this a few times in his ministry, hasn't he, where he's been ministering for Christ, and he gets pushed in another direction? He intends to go south to Asia, and God says in Acts 16, "No." Then he goes, "Well, since we'll have been east, we'll go north to Bithynia," and God says, "No," and the Spirit forbid him.

So, he sees an open door, moves towards it, and God closes it right in his face, might've even have flattened his nose, he was that close to going. He says, "No, I want you down in Troas." Kind of God pushed him down to the coast, west. He's in Troas. What happens? He gets a vision from the man of Macedonia, "Come over and help us." That's the first time Paul will move towards the European mainland. It's the first time he preaches the gospel outside of the Middle East. Flexibility. I hope you and I are like the bendable man. I don't know. It was in America, I think you had that. Remember the guy you could stretch and bend? What do you call him?

Gumby.

What do you call him?

Gumby.

Dumpy?

Gumby.

Gumpy?

Gumby.

Such a stupid idea. All right. Let's just call him the elastic man, the guy you can kind of stretch and bend. There's got to be some elasticity to us. You can sit down and pray. You can plan in God's will, but it's James four, only if the Lord wills, we get to do this. I can meet pastors who are in churches that they never thought they'd be in. I've met missionaries who are in a country they never thought they were going to. Be flexible, will you, with us, and may we be flexible with you. Let's be the kind of church that plans and forecasts and thinks ahead. But you know what? If we come up against a providential blockade, we'll just go in another direction for God.

You remember Tony Snow, worked for Fox News? He was one of their news readers. Then when George W. Bush became president, he made him his press secretary. If you follow his story, while he's the press

secretary, he kind of discovers he's got colon cancer and doesn't last very long. He was a God-fearing man, and he was asked what his spiritual lessons were from his fight with colon cancer, and he said this quote. "We want to live lives of predictable ease." Let's just pause there. Let's all admit, amen, to that.

We like that. We like life to go in one direction. We like our health to be steady. We like our financial income to be steady. You know what? If we're in a nice home and a nice community, don't disrupt us. We want to live lives of predictable ease, smooth, even trails as far as the eye can see, but God likes to go off road. It's a good statement. Paul would admit that. "Hey, I was going to spend the winter in Nicopolis, and then God took me off road, took me somewhere else. I'm in Rome, writing my last letter."

Let's move on. The emphasis on gospel strategy, secondly, the emphasis on gospel service. Paul here returns now to his master theme, verse 14. "Tell our people to learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful." Back in chapter one, verse eight, he has told the elders that they need to be men who are lovers of good things. In chapter one, verse 16, he has shown that the false teachers are incapable of doing any good work. Look at chapter two, verse 14. There he reminds us that Jesus gave himself for this purpose, to this end, that he might redeem us from lawless deeds, a life out of tune with God, and purify us as special people, zealous for good works, where we pray your kingdom come, your will be done, where we say, "God, to you be the glory and power and dominion forever."

Look at verse one of chapter three. "Remind them to be subject to rulers, authorities, to be ready to do every good work." Verse eight of chapter three, "Hey, I want you to say this and say it again and again and again. I want you to affirm it constantly, that those who believe in God should devote themselves to good works." Now he's back at it. Okay? Because he understands that one of the roles of a conclusion is to restate the purpose of the letter, and here you have it.

Now, we are reminded, I need to say it once more, that a Christian is not saved by good works. I think it was George Whitefield that said, "You can no more get to heaven by climbing on a rope made of sand than you can get to heaven by good works." In fact, Paul has told us that, hasn't he? Verse five of chapter three, "Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us." Point is this. If you're going to get to heaven, it's on the basis of God's work for you in Jesus Christ. Where God substituted the just for the unjust, God gave His son for you and me. Jesus gave himself for you and me. He shed blood, His life given, the sacrifice made. That's the ground of our acceptance before God, mercy, grace, gift.

So, the Christian life begins by deciding for Christ and His work for us, but once you and I have decided for Christ, we abide in Christ. Salvation is not some get-out-of-jail card, oh, I'm saved, I stick it in the back of my pocket, and forget about it. No, salvation is life-transformative. Salvation has a goal. God has predestined us. God has elected us. In time, God has regenerated us. In time, God has called us. In time, God indwells us by the Holy Spirit who prompts new affections so that we be made conformable to the image of His dear son. There's a goal in all of this.

Amen.

A people zealous for good works, a people that look like the Lord Jesus. When it's all said and done, when God's project of redemption's finished in your life and my life, we're going to look like Jesus. That's it. That's the goal. That's the journey then towards the goal, is that. So, you decide for Christ based on

the work He has done for us, but as you abide in Christ, you submit to the work of God in us, and that's what we're talking about here. It's Ephesians two, eight to 10, isn't it? We're not saved by works, but we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus onto good works. One is the root, faith, and the other is the fruit, good works.

But notice this, the emphasis. Notice the command. Let our people learn to maintain good works. I like that little phrase, our people. That's our people compared to the false teachers. That's our people compared to the Cretan culture, which is marked by lie and deception, and brute evil behavior. Our people need to heed this command, and that is to learn to do good works. That's the imperative here. They're not to drift towards good works. They're to drive themselves towards good works. Let our people learn to maintain good works.

We quoted Todd Wilson throughout this series. Zealous for Good Works here is a good work from him. Devotion to good works requires learning. It does not happen automatically. Devotion to good works is not our default setting. You don't come pre-programmed with a devotion to good works. Instead, devotion to good works is something that you must cultivate and learn. How do you learn? You learn by practice. You want to learn to preach? Preach. Start out with your cat, your dog, G.I. Joe, because nobody else wants to listen to you at this point. But as you practice, and you learn, and you cultivate, then people might start listening.

You want to learn to pray? Pray. There's just no other way to do it. A book will help, but it won't get you there. I mean, reading a book on prayer is like learning how to swim on dry land. Pray. Pray until you pray. Want to learn evangelism? Go and join Living Waters. Go out with our guys on a Friday night. Pick someone in your office and bug them for Jesus' glory. You know what I mean by that. Don't actually do that. Hopefully you get the point. Learn by practice. Do it. That's the command. Live out the ethical implications of the gospel.

We don't drift toward holiness. We don't gravitate naturally towards godliness. No, that comes through grace-driven effort on your part, where you exercise yourself unto godliness. You know the story of [Moody 00:32:28]. He finished his sermon, butchered the English language once again. He was uneducated, uncouth. When God made him, broke the mold. He was new, and his [inaudible 00:32:41] methods were creative. His sermons were so bad in terms of their grammar that they had to be edited before everybody could understand them.

One day after he preached, a woman come up and chastised him about his inability, his lack of competence, his kind of uncouth methods. Moody received it humbly and said, "Well, I can always learn. I can certainly learn from you." But remember, she was a critic, and critics usually aren't doing anything. Since they're not doing anything, they have plenty of time to tell others how to do what they're not doing. So, as Moody investigated this, he found that's simply what she was. She was a critic because she was wasn't doing any of it, to which Moody replied then, "Lady, I like what I'm doing better than what you're not doing." It's a good answer to any critic, and that's the point here. Get on with it.

Might be some trial and error. You know what? Your prayer life may take a while to take flight. Your evangelistic efforts might take a while to become effective. Your preaching might take a while to be all that it should be, but it's okay. As long as you're doing it, God will bless it. The compulsion is this, do it with haste. Okay? Let our people learn to maintain good works. That's the command, and that's the call, and here's the compulsion, to do it with urgency, to meet urgent needs. Look, that could be broadly anything.

I mean, good works, as we see back in the early part of chapter three, verse one, is good works and civic action. Be submissive to your rulers and those in authority, and obey them, and be ready to do good works. I think that's good works towards civil authorities. That's blessing your community. That's social work, coaching a Little League team, volunteering at a hospital, helping the homeless, visiting the imprisoned. It's all of that. It's playing your civic role, and that's good, and it's as broad as that. It's anything that enhances and blesses the lives of others in a way that glorifies God.

But I think the context you don't want to miss, look at verse 13. "Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way or on their journey with haste," there's that urgency, "that they may lack nothing." Since he goes on to talk about also the people need to maintain good works and meet urgent needs, Titus is to help these guys urgently get refueled and on their way, and God's people are to also do good works and meet urgent needs. It would be wrong, I think, to disconnect those two things.

While good works is broad, I think in its immediate context, the good work would be helping Titus to help Zenas and Apollos to advance the gospel, because there's no more urgent... I know about the widow and the orphan. I know about poverty. I know about injustice, but can you tell me a more urgent need than rescuing the perishing and caring for the dying? I can't, because you can help someone that's sick and extend their life. You can bless someone with water, and they can die of thirst for the living water, and they can sin enough, die, and be sick forever. You get the point.

My point is this, in no way disparage good works generally, but just to remind us the greatest good work is the proclamation and the promulgation of the gospel. That's the urgent need. That's where our time, our talent and treasure ought to go, rescuing the perishing. Evangelism is to take precedence over social justice and humanitarian work, and a reminder, if you are doing social justice issues and humanitarian work, you better put gospel front and center of that, or all you're doing is doing what the world does, and sometimes they do it better.

Preach it.

So, here is the urgent need. Get behind God's men and God's women who are making an impact for Jesus Christ. You know what? Let's be honest. Let's think about this. Given that challenge, with all this emphasis on social action, with all this emphasis on humanitarian work, I think every pastor in North America will tell you, missionary giving is dying, and missionary going is dying. So, that emphasis seems to be distracting us from the fulfillment of the Great Commission, or it seems to be replacing our passion for the Great Commission. Just be careful. Just be careful. That's all I'm saying.

So, you have the command, and you have the compulsion and the call and the concern. Look at the end of verse 14. The concern is this, that they may not be unfruitful, that they may not be unfruitful. Paul doesn't want them to be unproductive, because I think while it's not explicit, it's always implicit. We'll see this next week in our study of heaven. Paul has always got the judgment seat of Christ at the back of his mind. He talks about whatever we do, just prior to his teaching on that in II Corinthians five, we do it in a way that pleases God, because we'll give an account for all the things we have done in our body.

So, Paul says, "Hey, I don't want you to be unproductive. I don't want you to be unfruitful. I don't want you to be unrewarded. Of course, we're saved by grace, but grace produces good works. Grace produces gracious living. Grace produces those who promulgate the word of grace. This is what I want to see, and I want to see our people devoted to good works, meeting the urgent needs of gospel advancement so

that they not be unfruitful." See, he's thinking like Jesus, and he's thinking like Peter, because back in John 15, you know the parable or the analogy of the vine and the branches, the branch in a vine that's healthy draws life from the vine, and the branch produces fruit.

Jesus told us, "If you're saved, then you're going to be like a healthy tree that produces good fruit, and if you're not saved, you're going to be like a rotten tree that produces no good fruit." Jesus is a fruit inspector. It's a fact, John 15. He tells us in John 15:18, "My people need to bear much fruit," and Paul's aware of that. That's the backdrop to his own ministry, and so he says, "Hey," to the Christians in Crete, "Don't be unfruitful. The master didn't save you to be unfruitful, unproductive. He doesn't want you to underperform." Peter has the same thought, doesn't he, in II Peter, chapter one, verse eight, II Peter one, verse eight?

We'll back up into verse five where he challenges them to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus doesn't want you unfruitful. Peter doesn't want you unfruitful. Paul doesn't want you unfruitful.

I mean, think about the purpose of Jesus' death. Think about the end result of all His suffering and agony. It is to redeem to himself and purify to himself of people zealous for good works. If you love Jesus and you love His cross, you'll do good works. That's the purpose of it all. That's the goal. If you read Titus and all that God has promised us, in fact, when Titus right at the end here of chapter three is encouraged by Paul to constantly talk about belief in God and maintaining good works. That's preceded by the thought that we have become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

It's another motivation. Given what God has done for us, past, what God is doing for us, present, what God has yet to do for us in the future, we better get our act together and pursue good works so we're not unfruitful. Given the need of culture, the Cretans were liars and brutal beasts, lost, heading to an eternal damnation. The church better be about the good work of propagating the gospel urgently. That's the concern. Don't be a good-for-nothing Christian. Ask yourself this morning, "Am I underperforming?" Hey, it's Sunday morning. College game day is over. I can guarantee you that many a young man across this country is asking themselves, "Did I underperform yesterday? What if I had stretched just a little bit more for that ball? What if I'd have fought harder for that ball? What if I'd have tackled more aggressively?"

They're taking inventory. Do you? Paul takes that analogy all the time from the sporting world. Run so as to win. Exercise yourself unto godliness. Are you underperforming? Paul doesn't want that. Paul wants you working for Jesus Christ, meeting urgent needs. Let me tell this story and close with a very short thought, gospel sentiment from verse 15. But I've read a lot of stuff on William Booth. Quite an exciting life, founder of the Salvation Army, realized that the church of his day wasn't reaching people for Christ, especially in the tough areas of Liverpool and London, so he sets out with an army of people to make an impact for the gospel.

I hadn't read this story. It kind of all begins one night. He's coming home late at night. He had gone to keep vigil with a relative in hospital, first time he had been out at that kind of time, at night on the streets of London. It's middle of the morning, maybe 2:00, 3:00 in the morning. As he goes through the streets, he's shocked by the debauchery, the poverty, the brokenness, the sin, the prostitution. He's so

bothered by it, according to this story I read, he has a relative nearby that's near to him right at this moment in his own home, and he goes and wakes the guy up in the middle of the night, and the bleary-eyed relative kind of brings him in and listens to him as he just unloads about the prostitution, the dirt, the filth, the violence, the sad sight of those made in the image of God looking nothing like the glory of God.

His relative rubs the sleep from his eyes. You know what he says to him? "Didn't you know?" Booth's kind of shocked, steps back, and he said, "Well, if you knew, why aren't you doing something about it?" That's challenging. If you knew, if you know what I didn't know, you can go to bed unchallenged, unsettled by that, you're underperforming. That's the challenge. Gospel sentiment, verse 15, don't need to say a lot. "All who are with me greet you." They're not named, but wherever Paul was at this point in the Roman Empire, writing to Titus, and Apollos and Zenas would deliver this letter, they bring greetings from not only Paul, but a circle of friends with Paul. Don't you love this, this bigheartedness for the body of Christ, believers sending greetings to other believers? They're not little isolated islands to themselves.

Then Paul says, "Greet those who love us in the faith." Paul's thinking about people. He can imagine them in his eyes. Mind he can bring up faces, and he can bring up memories of people's kindnesses to him. I want you to say to those people, "Titus, I love them because they have loved me, and then grace be to you all." That's the point I want to get to as we close. It's a very simple thought. We covered it with Total Grace series, but Paul signs off where he signed on. He acknowledges their indebtedness to God's grace from start to finish, because that's how this letter is written. At the start, chapter one, verse four, grace and mercy and peace from God the Father, and he finishes with grace be with you all.

He's bracketed the letter with this notation that they need God's amazing grace from the beginning to the end of their Christian life. This is more than a literary custom. You could just put this down to this is good letter writing. Come on. You know better than that. Paul says in his letter of the Corinthians that, "I am what I am by the grace of God, and I labor more abundantly than anybody else, but it is the grace of God working in me." You want to understand me head to foot? You understand it's a story of grace, saving grace, serving grace, singing grace, sufficient grace, speaking grace, strengthening grace. We covered it all in that series. Grace is our past experience, isn't it? Grace is our present need, and grace is our future hope. That's just about it. Don't ever think that grace gets you in, and that's where it ends. Grace gets you in, and grace moves you on. Of His fullness have we received grace upon grace.

Let me finish with this prayer. Let's bow our heads as the team comes up, and just listen to these words. I want to read them, but I'll hopefully read them as a prayer, maybe the expression of our hearts as we finish this series on Titus where Paul finished Titus. An old Scottish saint said this, "May God grant us grace to fill our need of grace, then give us grace to ask for more grace, then give us grace to receive grace. Having been given grace, give us grace to be grateful for grace." Father, that is our prayer as we finish our study on Titus. Thank you for this book, the challenge to do good based on the good doing of Jesus Christ, and may we do good wherever we go, wherever we are, with what we have in the time you've given. For Jesus' sake, amen.