

## Grace and Good Works

Titus 2:1 - 3:8

By Randy Wages

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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

### I. Introduction:

- A. The title of today's message is "Grace and Good Works." Now I suspect some of you may be wondering, "Why would he direct our attention toward doing good works on this Easter Sunday morning? Surely, on this of all Sundays, we're going to hear a message about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ." Well, we celebrate His resurrection every time we gather together around the gospel and today will be no exception.
- B. Regardless, I hope I've piqued your interest early with this title, "Grace and Good Works." You who are familiar with the ministry of the gospel as preached here at Eager Avenue Grace Church know that we believe salvation is totally by grace, with no contribution whatsoever from the sinners who God saves – that salvation is "... not of works less any man should boast." (Eph. 2:9) As we so often see in God's word, the truth of salvation by grace is set in contrast to presumption of salvation by works. So we know these opposing doctrines cannot be mixed – they are mutually exclusive. Your hope is based upon one or the other. If there is any element of works done by or through the sinner that is presumed to play a causal role or be a determining factor so as to form any part of the ground or basis of a sinner's salvation, then as Romans 11:6 teaches us, it is of works and therefore it is no more grace. So don't be fooled by the title. I'm not going to suggest any mixing of these opposing doctrines of grace and works. Instead, I hope to direct your attention today to Paul's letter to Titus where we'll consider the Gospel doctrine of salvation by grace and its inseparable connection with the walk of a true believer as one who is made zealous of performing good works, in accord with God's definition of good works.
- C. Today, I would like for you to follow along with me as we consider a scripture passage from Titus, chapters 2 and 3. But before we do, I want to share in advance an outline of the major points that were impressed upon me in my own study so that as we go through these verses, you may look for verification of these truths. There are 3 points I would like to direct your attention toward:
1. All believers are made zealous to perform good works. We'll see that while a sinner's salvation is by grace and therefore has nothing to do with his or her character and conduct, that character and conduct do in fact matter.

2. What is a Good Work? / Why can only believers perform them?

3. The Motive for Good Works: And then finally, we will consider the motive for good works and how believers are to motivate or encourages fellow believers to perform good works?

## II. Exposition of the Text: Titus 2:1 – 3:8:

Turn with me to Titus chapter 2 as we'll consider this chapter as well as the first 8 verses of chapter 3. In this passage you'll see that, while the gospel doctrine of salvation by grace cannot be separated from and is vital to the proper exhortation to believers to perform good works, the main theme of this passage is Paul's admonition to Titus to be diligent in encouraging believers to walk worthy of the doctrine (and consequently I believe that is the message of God's word that is relevant to us as well). So let's begin in Titus 2, verse 1 where we read...

***'But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:*** <Notice it begins not with the instruction that he speak sound doctrine, although that is certainly included as we'll see in a moment. But the admonition here is to speak the things which are becoming to sound doctrine. That is, he's referring to their walk, their conduct which becomes the Gospel of God's grace, the sound doctrine. He's speaking of things that are ornamental to or adorn the doctrine. Notice the type of things he refers to as we continue in verse 2...> <sup>2</sup>***That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.*** <sup>3</sup>***The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;*** <sup>4</sup>***That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,*** <sup>5</sup>***To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.*** <sup>6</sup>***Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.*** <sup>7</sup>***In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,*** <So we see here, he is including doctrine and he continues saying that they should be a pattern of good works by showing...> <sup>8</sup>***Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.*** <Believers are to be careful as ambassadors of Christ, to not bring shame and reproach on the Gospel by giving the enemies of the Gospel cause to discount our message. And he continues in verse 9 of Titus 2 saying,...>

<sup>9</sup>***Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again;*** <sup>10</sup>***Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*** <To "adorn the doctrine of God" is first to believe and embrace it, to profess it and to hold fast (persevere) in that profession and to walk worthy of it for it concerns God and His glory – who He is.

**<sup>11</sup>For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,**

<This “grace of God” is referring to the doctrine of grace – the Gospel of grace. Now we know that not all men hear the Gospel of God’s grace. So in this context, he is indicating that it is no longer confined to the Jews under the Old Covenant but now has gone out so as to appear to all sorts of men – Jew and Gentile alike>

**<sup>12</sup>Teaching us** <The “us” here is referring to believers to whom the Gospel came not in word only, but in power > ***that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly,*** <That means agreeable to and in submission to the revealed will of God – revealed in His Word.> ***in this present world;*** **<sup>13</sup>Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and** <better read “even”> ***our Saviour Jesus Christ;***

<Now pay close attention to this verse 14 as He is speaking of the Savior saying...> ***<sup>14</sup>Who gave himself for us, <(1)> that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and <(2)> Who gave himself for us that he might...> purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*** <Now, we’ll come back in a moment to this verse, 14, for this really struck a significant chord with me. But going forward as chapter 2 ends, Paul instructs Titus saying...> ***<sup>15</sup>These things*** <What “things” – the things which become sound doctrine as mentioned in verse 1. These things...> ***speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.*** <That is, Titus deliver these exhortations so that no one could accuse you of being negligent in your responsibilities in the ministry. Now he continues in chapter 3, verse 1 saying...>

***Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, <sup>2</sup>To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men. <sup>3</sup>For <or because> we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.***

<Think about this list. Paul is saying that me and you, Titus, and all of fallen humanity, me and you, were foolish – we come into this world in darkness, not wise unto salvation, without understanding of spiritual things, imagining a way of salvation that seems right – but ends in death. We were and are disobedient – not only in outward sins, but disobedient to the command to believe the Gospel of which we all by nature were ignorant.

We all are initially deceived by Satan – the deceivableness of unrighteousness as the scripture calls it – that is, believing that salvation could be acquired at least in part by something I did or didn't do – something other than (or in addition to) the one righteousness that Christ established in His doing and dying and that God has imputed or charged to the sinner's account, in the same way that their sins were charged to the account of Christ, their Substitute, that He might pay the penalty due unto them before. We could continue through this list of verse 3, but the gist of it is that Paul is saying, "Show meekness, be gentle, unto all men, because who made you to differ.

So reminding Titus of the natural estate of all of us, he goes in verse 4, saying...?  
***<sup>4</sup>But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,***

<Now let's pause right there. That opening phrase, "But after that..." is better translated as "Notwithstanding who we were, all this foolishness, disobedience, undeserving sinners, the kindness and love of God appeared." Another way to translate the phrase, "But after that ..." is when that was the case – when you had done nothing in the way of qualifying yourself to be a recipient of the love of God appearing unto you, when there was no distinction between you and other sinners that might prompt God to be more apt to show you any mercy – the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared.

And this kindness and love of God toward man appears to God's people in the preaching of the Gospel and the Spirit's effectual calling us unto Him. We can see this for he speaks of its appearing as he continues in verse 5 saying that He saved us...>

***<sup>5</sup>Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;  
<sup>6</sup>Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;***

<Now notice in verse 5, He says to Titus as to other believers, "He saved us..." We know that the scriptures speak of salvation in its various aspects beginning with our eternal election in Christ from everlasting, all the way to our final glory in heaven. But here in Titus 3:5 it is clear from the context that Paul is using the word "saved" to refer to the new birth, the gift of spiritual life (regeneration) and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit that takes place in the conversion and life of the believer.

And the truth set forth here (that it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done") totally refutes those who imagine that God chose a people based upon His foreknowledge of their reaction or response in adopting or believing whatever their body of faith, their gospel, sets forth.

This would describe those who imagine that God saw something good in them, saw perhaps that they would be less obstinate than others, etc. Well, that's works salvation as well for it too sets forth that the ultimate determining factor of one's salvation is the merit God foresaw in the sinner as He looked down into the future rather than the truth of salvation by grace – the determining factor being the merits of Christ's Person and work alone. The scripture here is clear that it's not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy that He saved us – that He gave us life as a fruit and effect of Christ's saving work for us.

In my study of this verse, I lean toward the interpretation of the phrase “works of righteousness” here as referring to the works of a believer after conversion. But however you interpret that phrase, it is crystal clear that salvation in no sense is attributed unto any work of man – be it the acceptable, pleasing, good works of a believer or the evil, dead work of a spiritually dead man. Salvation is not by a work of man! God says here that instead it is according to His mercy. It can't be both. If you can save yourself if you'll just do your part and believe, you don't need mercy. You just need to cut your end of the bargain by walking down an aisle, sincerely inviting Christ into your life, whatever. But my friend, that's not grace and it is a denial of the need for it. To persist in holding such notions is to remain in the deception common to us all by nature and that is devastating to one's eternal well being.

Now he also says that it is by “the washing of regeneration.” And that is not referring to water baptism as some erroneously suggest. We are not saved by being baptized. Rather baptism is a profession of having already been saved. In John 3:5, Jesus spoke of the necessity for all who shall enter the kingdom of God of being “born of water and of the Spirit.” That is, the grace of the Spirit is comparable to the purity and cleaning virtue of water. So those He saves in regeneration and conversion are said to be washed and cleansed, having their hearts purified by the God-given gift of faith, and their consciences purged from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. 9:14).

In verse 5, we also read that “...according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” The Greek word translated “renewing” means by repetition or reversal. It also carries the connotation of making new or renovating. As such, I believe he is referring here to both the Holy Spirit's initial work in giving us spiritual life, granting us faith and bringing about a reversal or repentance from our dead works in having imagined salvation was conditioned in any degree on ourselves.

And I believe this “renewing” also refers to the repetitive influence of the Holy Spirit, as believers attend to the means of worship, bible study, and prayer and as guided by the ongoing indwelling influence of the Holy Spirit in the believer it makes the believer, though still plagued with a sin nature, zealous to varying degrees unto good works – all as a fruit and effect / a result of that which Christ has done for us – that which He shed on us abundantly through Christ Jesus our Savior as verse 6 reads.

Then continuing in verse 7, Paul writes.... *That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.* (Heirs – I love that word. An inheritance as adopted children of God – an inheritance we could not earn but was earned for us as we are justified by his grace. Romans 3:24 gives us further commentary on how we are justified or declared not guilty as it states, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...” You see, God does not save (as the word is used in the context of vs. 5) unjustified folks. You see, regeneration (being born again) does not justify any, but rather it is the result of having been justified and in that miraculous life giving work of the Spirit, the glorious truth of how we are justified is made known to us under the sound of the gospel, applied to our hearts by the Spirit.

Then in verse 8, Paul wrote <sup>8</sup>*This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.* This “faithful saying” is the same phrase Paul used in his other letters to describe the Gospel as a trustworthy or faithful saying – worthy to be believed. As He put it in I Timothy 1:15, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” Now Paul tells Titus here to constantly affirm “these things.” What are “these things?” It is the Gospel, the very doctrine of salvation by grace that he has been setting forth in the 3 verses prior to this one. Now notice that his constant affirmation of the gospel itself is aimed toward believers in order that they might be careful to maintain good works. I will elaborate on this some more in a few moments but first....

III. Summary: Let’s reconsider those 3 main points I mentioned at the onset. First:

- A. All believers are made zealous to perform good works. Look again with me at Titus 2:14 where it speaks of the God-man, the Savior Jesus Christ, saying., “<sup>14</sup>Who gave himself for us, <(1)> that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and <(2)> Who gave himself for us that he might...> purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Now clearly the “peculiar people,” the “us” here refers to those for whom Christ gave Himself. The original word translated “peculiar” means special, beyond usual, as in one’s own. He is speaking of a people who are the purchased possession of Christ, distinct from all others in that He gave Himself for them to redeem them and to purify them (uniquely them) unto himself as a people zealous of good works.

Now as a result of Christ having given Himself for them, they are redeemed. That does not mean that some mere attempt was made to save them or that some prerequisite conditions were met that set the stage for their salvation, contingent upon some future action or response from each individual sinner. No, redemption is not an attempt made, but rather it is a price paid that was due unto their sins! And it was paid in full. These peculiar people (the ones He saves) are His possessions. And just as sure as the penalty due unto their sins has been fully remitted, notice that the sure result of Him having given Himself for them is also that He might purify unto Himself a people distinguished by their zeal to perform good works. Christ could not and did not fail to redeem His people. Likewise, He could not and did not fail to purify them as a people, zealous of good works.

In 2 Corinthians, 13:5, we read the exhortation to “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith;...*” Well let’s not kid ourselves. Titus 2 is teaching us that all for whom Christ died shall be made zealous to perform good works. So, like true genuine faith and repentance, every believer must at least in some degree possess a desire to do good works and if that is totally absent, then we should examine ourselves further and pray that God will so bless our hearts. True believers are blessed with a regard for the honor and glory of God in salvation and as such become a people zealous of good works, not in order to be justified and saved, but as a result and evidence of having been saved. Their zeal is in obedience to the will of God, as a testimony of their subjection and gratitude to Him.

B. What is a Good Work? / Why can only believers perform them?. Secondly, I asked you us to seek to understand just what is a good work. How is a good work (as judged by God) is to be distinguished from an evil work. Well, if it is a direct result of Christ having given Himself for us, then we know that it must be something that the natural (unregenerate) mind cannot attain to or even understand by His natural conscience. What then is a good work? In last week’s bulletin, there was an excellent article written by our former Pastor, Bill Parker, with this very title, “What is a Good Work?” If you haven’t read it already, I recommend you do so and consider the numerous scriptures listed to support his conclusions.

C. But today, I do want to share an abbreviated version with you. As supported by scripture, this article shows that a good work is:

1. A work God does in and through His people. It is Christ living in and through us by His Spirit and His word. It is not our work but HIS. God produces them in us. (*John 3:21; Gal. 2:20; 5:22-23; Php. 1:6; 2:13; Heb. 13:20-21*)
2. Secondly, even though these works are the operation of God, the fruit of the Spirit, and as produced by God they are perfect, when they come through us (our minds, affections, and wills), they are contaminated by the flesh. Our best works are still tainted with remaining sin, and though we who are in Christ cannot be condemned (*Rom. 8:1,33-34*), we are not yet perfect in ourselves (*Rom. 7:14-25*). We are still in need of continual cleansing by His blood (*1 John 2:1-2*).
3. A good work is aimed towards the glory of God in Christ. Good works will always, ultimately, point sinners away from self and to Christ. (*Isa. 61:3; Matt. 5:16; John 3:30; 15:8; 1 Cor. 10:31; Php. 1:11; 2 Thess. 1:11-12; 1 Pet. 2:12*)
4. A good work is a work performed with the desire that God will use them to bring lost sinners to the truth and to edify His church. A good work is a testimony, as it is viewed in light of the Gospel, that our righteousness before God is not our works but Christ and Him crucified. (*Matt. 5:13-16; Gal. 5:6, 13-14; Col. 4:5; 1 Tim. 6:18; Titus 3:8; Heb. 6:10-11; 10:24-25; 1 Pet. 3:1-2*).

I believe that is the meaning of Christ words in Matt 5:16 when He said, ***“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*** The light we are to let shine is the light of the gospel that we share in the ministry of, which we identify with. So only believers of the gospel of God’s grace can manifest what God calls “good works” that redound to His glory. Remember Titus 2:14 – He purified them unto Himself – for Himself – for His glory that He might be worshipped and praised as He is revealed in Christ – as both a just God and a Savior.

D. The motive for good works - Lastly, I asked you to consider the motive for good works. Well the article I just mentioned also noted that a good work is motivated by grace, gratitude, and love for Christ, not legal threats and mercenary promises of earned rewards.



Looking back again at Titus 3:8, notice that Paul told Titus to affirm constantly these things – this faithful saying – the Gospel message itself as set forth in the preceding verses wherein we see that it is according to his mercy that God saves – by the Person and work of Jesus Christ our Savior in justifying them by His grace, they are made heirs. We are not to pervert the gospel by trying to motivate fellow believers to live upright lives in order to gain favor or avoid God’s wrath. We are to consistently preach the gospel to them and as verse 8 teaches us – we do so that those which have believed in God (not in themselves for salvation) might be careful to maintain good works.

You see believers are still sinners, far from perfect. And we need to be continually encouraged to adorn the gospel of God’s grace by our walk of faith. And this is accomplished as believers are constantly reminded of the wonderful news of how God saved them as objects of His mercy and grace – that in knowing He first loved them, they would be motivated to please Him out of love and gratitude for their great God and Savior.

As Paul implored fellow believers in Romans 12:1 and following, “***I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup>And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*** Well, how does this renewing of the Holy Spirit as it is stated in Titus 3:5 take place. It takes place as we faithfully attend to the means – meeting together to continually feed on and hear anew this precious Gospel of God’s grace in the Person and work of Christ as it is set forth in God’s word.

## VI. Closing:

Well, I pray today that you too can see this inseparable connection between grace and good works – not “good” as men define it but according to God’s judgments. As we’ve seen, good works do include the efforts of believers to conduct ourselves so as to not bring shame and reproach on the gospel – to act in ways that are becoming or adorn the gospel we profess. And these are good works in that they are accompanied by our identification with the gospel of grace. So grace and good works are indeed inseparable.

On this Easter Sunday, much will be said in pulpits across our land concerning the resurrection of Christ. Tragically and sadly most listeners will be pointed to look to what they call a victory over sin and its consequence of death, but it will be presented along with a body of doctrine that will actually suggest that Christ merely made a victory possible. Instead, it is suggested that you, the sinner, must fulfill the ultimate, determining role by doing your part to save yourself. To imagine that Christ merely made salvation possible is to trust in a counterfeit, just as I and many of you once did. Like Paul and Titus, like all by nature – we too were once foolish (not having been made wise unto salvation, deceived until God put us under this gospel message – until He drew us to look to Christ and His finished work alone for all of our salvation.

But to those of us that God has saved by His mercy, as justified sinners we can take full assurance in the glorious truth of a risen Savior!. Such have repented of their former notions concerning God and how He saves sinners as commanded by God in Acts 17, verse 30 where we read, ***“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: <sup>31</sup>Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”*** You see, just as sin demands death, righteousness demands life. And the only perfect satisfaction to God’s holy law and justice (the only righteousness) ever established on this earth was by the impeccable obedience unto death of the God-man., Jesus Christ our Savior. And dear friend, if you must have that – then it is a fruit and effect of His having died for you, as your Substitute and Representative. And as sure as He arose from the grave, having perfectly satisfied the justice of God both in precept and penalty, so likewise can you be assured – you who have been drawn by God’s Spirit to look to His imputed righteousness as your only ground or basis for being saved. If that describes you, then rejoice, for as sure as He is risen, you too shall live, eternally blessed in Christ your Savior!

In Ephesians 2:10, such objects of God’s grace are said to be His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

They are inseparable – Grace and Good Works!

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God’s grace found in the only infallible source, God’s word itself – the Bible.