

Mission 1: Followership, the rhythm of the gospel

Titus 3:1-11

MPS: Grace transforms us to follow Jesus in the world.

OBJ: Every Christian can understand following Jesus by four priorities.

READ Titus 3:1-11

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned. **Titus 3:1-11**

INTRO In our study of Titus we've looked at leadership, discipleship and now we move to our final consideration, mission. These are not three programs in the church, but how the church operates to accomplish our mission of making disciples. Everything about the church and in the church equips and trains every person to follow Jesus faithfully. Today our consideration of mission will focus on four priorities of followership. Followership means that before mission becomes an activity it must be a Gospel-rooted conviction to follow Jesus and present a living testimony.

Discipleship is the relationally-networked training while on mission through which grace transformation occurs. A person must live on mission to experience discipleship that produces spiritual growth and maturity. The purpose of mission for every Christian is to grow and mature you into Jesus' image as you follow Him. Mission is where God makes his people into His image. Mission begins for every Christian by faithfully following Jesus.

TRANS Titus 3 provides four priorities that frame our understanding of following Jesus.

1st, hold a VISION for how God wants to live through you as a Christian. .1-2

Paul provides seven descriptors that equip us to know how to live out faith in following Jesus. "Submissive" guides how we relate to governing rulers and authorities. This frames a general inclination, not an absolute rule, for how we relate to authority in this world. Christians submit to worldly authorities because we live under the highest authority, Jesus.

"Be obedient" means Christians hold a general inclination toward God's word. This stands in direct contradiction to a heart of sinful rebellion. Obedience is not simply about what we do in action, but most importantly the inclination of our heart toward God's Word that desires obedience above all. The longer you walk in obedience, the deeper the transformation of your personhood into Christlikeness: character, thinking, feeling, and desires.

"Be ready for every good work" means we live with a readiness to act in accordance with godliness. We will look at good works more in verse 8. Here the emphasis rests on readiness. People that are consumed with self are never ready to do good. People who are obedient to God live ready to do good.

"Speak evil of no one". Christians don't attack other's character, insult or speak evil with malicious intent toward them. Christians guard their words to align with the good their life produces.

“*Avoid quarreling*”. Christ calls Christians to be peacemakers at all possible times. A disposition to fighting shows an ungodly orientation to others that opposes them instead of loving them. We can’t love another person and fight with them at the same time.

*Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. Heb 12:14
that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 1 Tim 2:2*

“*Be gentle*”. Nothing is more powerful than a capable, mighty person who holds a disposition towards mercy, especially toward those who mistreat and revile you.

“*Show perfect courtesy toward all*”. A humility of spirit produces an honor toward others that treats them with dignity and respect, without demanding they earn it. [Christians regard people as God loves them, not as they present themselves.](#)

TRANS Now, I know what most of you would say; “But pastor, these don’t describe the reality of my life most days.”

Vision sees what 'ought to and must be' where something 'is not yet'. These actions may not be fully perfected in your life, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't be the vision for your life. A vision holds strong, powerful benefits for our lives.

Vision motivates, moving you from where you are and what you are doing to where you need to be and what you need to be doing. **Vision guides**, showing that you haven’t obtained or are falling short of the vision, and it brings conviction and repentance to help you make a plan to get there. **Vision drives**, holding us steady to persevere when everything else seems to be going wrong or not working. **Vision inspires**, influencing others in the same direction that it is leading you.

When we hold a vision for our lives that aligns with God’s calling, we maintain a focus on God’s work in us. Jesus endured the cross for the joy set before Him. (Heb 12:2) This “joy” was the work God sent him to earth to accomplish, dying on the cross to conquer sin, crush Satan, appease wrath and bring salvation. [The only way we will ever overcome the condemnation of sin is to remain focused on the glory of our Savior.](#)

Set your eyes on the kind of person God is making you and by faith live it out now. [Hold a VISION for how God wants to live through you.](#)

TRANS A strong vision of God’s will is important as we must remember the transforming power of the Gospel.

[2nd, REMEMBER the transforming power of the Gospel.](#) .3-7

The vision we hold of God’s will for us contrasts the reality of who we were without Jesus. Paul sets forth with blunt clarity what we were all like without God’s grace. This stark contrast reminds us of what Jesus has done for us. This is who we were before Christ.

We were...

- “*Foolish*” means without understanding or reason that aligns with godly wisdom, fully satisfied with personal rationale.
- “*Disobedient*” shows a complete disregard for authority. We don’t want to submit our lives to anyone for any reason. We want to rule our own lives.
- “*Led astray*” is the result of foolish disobedience that arises when our foolish understanding leads us to make decisions that lead away from God in every way and instance. Left to ourselves, we can only go away from God.
- “*slaves to various passions*” is the foregone conclusion when personal vices control us. We become enslaved to them. We know no different, and pursue greater pleasure as stronger lusts overtake us. Every time one grows the other is strengthened and continually dig a deeper hole of deception that buries us in self-seeking.
- “*malice and envy*” form the pit we’ve dug for ourselves that causes us to see the world differently. Completely unsatisfied with our pleasure-holed indulgence, we look at others with contempt and jealousy because selfishness demands all glory and pleasure for me.
- “*hated by others and hating one another*”. A lack of godly wisdom makes us a completely undesirable person, to ourselves and others.

You may not have been the very worst of all or of any one of these. But what you were of any of these was enough to separate you eternally from God, set you on a path of walking farther and farther from God and condemning your soul eternally to separation from God in hell. **Graceless people become increasingly more undesirable to themselves as they become more consumed with themselves.**

God's grace through the gospel of Jesus Christ is the ONLY thing that distinguishes between verses 1-2 and verse 3 being the epitaph of our life. When we forget that it is God's grace that saves, even our good deeds condemn us before God. (Isa 64:6) This includes any inherent good we think we have too. There is no part of "me" that holds any measure of saving power for my life or anyone else's. Without Jesus we are hopelessly and helplessly damned in sin.

TRANS "But..." And just when the weight of condemnation seems to be about to crush, a loud creak and a crash stop the crushing blow. THIS is God's great "grace boom", when eternity pierces time and space, that moment when God's grace that appeared in Jesus suddenly takes hold in appearance in our heart and everything changes.

"he saved us" **When grace appears, God saved us.** He didn't have to. He didn't need to. He had no good reason to. He just wanted to. God saves; NOT because we are worthy or deserving, but because the Father is merciful, loving, kind and good. All that was true of you and me in verse 3 is now washed in the blood of Jesus and new life by Holy Spirit is placed in us. **Grace makes us no longer alienated from God but now made heirs with Christ.**

God has done for us what we could never do for ourselves. THIS is what we must remember. The less you believe that verse 3 describes you, the less you'll believe verse 4-7 is necessary for you. The moment you forget the reality of verse 3 is 'you without Jesus', becomes the moment you think 'Jesus doesn't matter all that much in every moment, situation, relationship and circumstance of life. **I am often not what I ought to be, and surely not what I will be, but praise God by His grace alone I am no longer what I used to be. AMEN! It's not about who YOU are, but who Jesus is and WHAT He has done FOR you. Grace transforms all of life from sin-condemned to grace-boomed, Father-loved, Jesus-covered and Spirit-washed, regenerated and filled.**

#2: REMEMBER the Transforming power of God's grace through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Salvation is God's mission in the world. When grace boomed, God wasn't just passing through. He abides in His people to make His glory known. God's mission becomes the mission He gives His people to. Because God's grace appeared, we preach grace everywhere so God can save. **When salvation is strong in us mission will remain a top priority for us.**

TRANS Grace makes a distinct change in life. Once you've received the gospel, receiving in life is no longer sufficient. God fills us so that we give, and primarily through serving.

3rd, DEVOTE yourself to good works. .8

Paul tells Titus that the gospel, the saying he has just given, should be insisted upon in order to move people to devote themselves to good works. The gospel re-orient a person from being served to serve as Jesus modeled. The service of good works is worthy of every Christian's devotion. **Serving is not an admirable deed for the Christian, but an essential discipline in which we devote our lives to God and others.**

Christians do a specific kind of works. "Good" is not a generic term, but holds a distinctive aim toward God-honoring and God-likeness. In other words, good deeds should always be accompanied with a testimony that points the recipient and others toward God as the motivation and only one worthy of glory (credit). God wants his people to be ready to do good that reflects Him as the only one who is "good" (Luke 18:18-19) and the giver of every good gift. **When Christians devote themselves to good works it demonstrates the goodness and loving kindness of our Savior.**

Devoting oneself to good works is so important that it must be insisted upon. I know plenty of people who expect their pastor and leaders to entertain them. I know few who have demanded we insist upon their serving. Most, today, are completely offended if you try to insist anything upon their lives. So, with this in mind I want to say that the leadership at LifePoint will continue to insist upon your serving.

ILLUS I tell our staff that they should never hesitate nor apologize to ask, encourage and urge people to serve.

People love to say “No” to serving. Leaders serve people best when we just won't take “no” for an answer. Serving is a Christian's path to growth and maturity, because until you've served everything remains only information without action. Christians who do not serve are deceived hearers of the word and not doers. (James 1:22) [I am laboring to build a culture among the people of LifePoint who deeply long to serve one another and the world.](#)

Serving holds incalculable good for Christian growth and maturity. Service AS the church among the body encourages and equips for right service in the world. Serving IN the church shouldn't be the only place you serve, but neither should it be absent in your serving. Serving as the church among the church provides vital relational networking for spiritual growth and maturity. If you have time to serve everywhere else in the world but no time to serve in the church, then serving is not your problem, idolatry is. You are worshipping a false god other than the Lord Jesus Christ. When you fail to serve in the life of the church, you remove a source of strength, growth and maturity from which you live. [Christians don't live out the Christian life. We live out of the life Christ has placed within us through serving.](#)

Christian, God recreated you to DO good works. (Eph 2:10) Until you DO, you are not the new God re-created in you. [Good deeds are so important in serving God's mission that Christians devote themselves to DO them.](#)

4th, GUARD against division. .9-11

Finally, there remain many opportunities for Christians to get sidetracked from following Jesus. The biggest temptations appeal to our strongest desires and most susceptible areas of life. [Following Jesus demands that we guard against anything that threatens to distract, deceive or deter our faithfulness.](#)

Anything that is unprofitable should not be prioritized and allowed to interfere in following Jesus.

- “*Foolish controversies*” derive from a “pre-grace understanding”. After we've received grace, Christians apply the gospel to walk in God's truth. This doesn't mean all controversies go away. It does mean that stop deterring your faithfulness in mission.
- “*Genealogies*” references the way family lineage is used in religion practices for personal significance. This is likely not what it meant in that day, but for today I tell you just because your grandparents, parents of other relatives were Christians doesn't make you any more favored with God outside of Jesus.
- “*Dissensions*” refers to strife and quarrels between people. God's grace gives every Christian the means to deal with every problem and problem person, with grace. They don't deserve it, but neither did you, yet you took it anyway. Try it. It will change your life for extending it and theirs for receiving it. “*Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*” Jesus taught us to pray. (Matt 6:12) You can't genuinely pray for forgiveness until you're willing to give it. “*Forgive, and you will be forgiven.*” (Luke 6:37) You can't really accept forgiveness when you refuse to give it. Some people can't forgive themselves. Most, if not all, struggle to forgive others. When we truly receive God's grace, we will give it as freely as we receive it...“BOOM!” Dissensions gone.
- “*Quarrels about the law*”. Nothing is more justified in a person's heart than the strength of their “right position” in theological debate with another. There are right times to engage debate. They usually aren't when most occur.

Christians personally guard against unprofitable practices so they don't distract from following Jesus. The best way to guard against divisions is to intentionally engage in practices that build unity. It's most difficult to be divisive with the person you serve alongside to do good. It's easiest to create division when you sit back and only critique other's serving. [Serving Jesus' mission together builds unity that guards against divisions among God's people.](#)

TRANS There are times and situations, though, when individuals must be addressed directly.

People who like to be or create stumbling blocks need to be put out of the way. This is not a person who makes a mistake or has a bad day, but one that consistently stirs up division among the church that distracts from mission. Divisive people are not allowed to go unaddressed in the congregation. And those that choose to continue in divisive practices are to be put out. The mission of God trumps the personal agenda of any individual, even when it seems harmless and comes clothed in lazy jolly. Faithfulness to the mission of God through the people of God is more important to God than any one person who seeks to thwart God's work.

CLOSE

Has grace transformed your heart to follow Jesus?

Are you living to prioritize following Jesus, to seek first the Kingdom of God in your life?

What do you need to do today to take that first step from where you are to where Holy Spirit is leading you?