

16. Learning to Practice Good Works

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to help others learn to live godly lives. We saw that it is possible for every Christian to do good works because of the fact that the Holy Spirit is working in each of our lives. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us the power to do good works as we learn to depend on Him for strength instead of trying to do things in our own strength. In our topic today, we are going to see how to help our children learn to practice good works in their lives.

Titus 3:8 says, “This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.” A faithful saying is a saying upon which we can always depend. As a result, Paul told Titus to continually remind Christians of this statement. Then he gave the statement that “Those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.” Here, we see that as Christians we want to give careful attention to the things that we do. We want to help each Christian learn to carry out good works. Christ said in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” As we help our children learn to do the good works that God has for each one of us, we see that those works bring glory to God. Those works are also profitable for each Christian because God will reward all works that have eternal value. 1 Corinthians 3:14 says, “If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward.” The Lord is eager to reward us and our children.

We also see that those good works are good and profitable to others. The word that is translated “good” in this verse means *that which is good in its character and beneficial in its effects*. As we show other Christians how to do those things that are pleasing to God, we see that those things are also noticed by other people. The word that is translated “profitable” means *that those works are beneficial to others*. The word translated “profitable” is only used three other times in the New Testament. In 1 Timothy 4:8, we see that the word is used twice. That verse says, “For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” Here, we see that godliness is profitable for all things. Then 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” In these verses, we see that the Word of God equips us to live godly lives and to practice every good work.

We also see that we are to avoid certain things as we practice good works. Titus 3:9-11 says, “But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.” Here, we see that there are certain things that we want to avoid if we are going to be effective in doing the good works that the Lord has for us. The word that is translated “disputes” means *questions or debates*. It is used in 2 Timothy 2:23 where we read, “But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.” Here, we see that foolish and ignorant disputes just stir up strife instead of helping

those who are not Christians come to an understanding of how to have forgiveness of sin and eternal life.

Genealogies are the records of the line of a family. The only other place this form of the word is used in the New Testament is 1 Timothy 1:4, where we read, “Nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.” We see that endless study of genealogies will end up causing disputes. The word that is translated “contentions” means *strife or arguing*. In 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, we read, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?” The Christians in Corinth had not grown to spiritual maturity. As a result, their lives were filled with envy, strife and divisions just like the lives of those who were not even Christians.

We see that Paul also warned Titus to avoid strivings about the law. Throughout his ministry Paul was followed by Jews who wanted to get the new Christians to follow the Jewish law. Paul knew that such people would want to argue with Titus. In Galatians 3:24-25 Paul had written, “Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” The purpose of the law was to show people that they were guilty of sin and needed a Savior. However, once a person comes to Christ we are no longer under the law. That is why Galatians 5:1 says, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” The law was the yoke of bondage to which Paul was referring as he wrote this verse. Paul went on to say in Galatians 5:13, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” We are to use our liberty to serve one another in love and not to cause us to argue about the law.

Paul said that all of the things mentioned in this verse are “unprofitable and useless.” We will never have an effective ministry to those who are not yet Christians by doing those things that are useless. That is why Paul told Titus to reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition. A divisive person is one who continues to do the things that Paul had just warned Titus to avoid. The goal of such a person is to gain followers for himself instead of Christ. Acts 20:30 says, “Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” Here, we see why such a person was to be rejected after the first and second warning. Matthew 18:15-17 says, “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that “by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” and if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.” Here, we see the Biblical process for removing such a person from the church.

We also see why such a person should be removed from the church. Verse eleven says, “Knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.” The word that is translated

“warped” means *to change for the worse or to corrupt*. The word that is translated “sinning” means *one who has wandered away from the Word of God*. 1 Corinthians 8:12 says, “But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.” Here, we see that such a person hurts the growth of other Christians. We also see why such a person says what he says. We see that he is self-condemned. Such a person says and does the things that he says and does to try and cover his own sin and rebellion against God.

Titus 3:12-15 goes on to say, “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.” Here, we see that Paul planned to send either Artemas or Tychicus to replace Titus on the island of Crete at least for a period of time. This is the only time that Artemas is mentioned. However, Tychicus was mentioned by Paul in several other places in the letters that he wrote.

The reason why Paul was going to send one of those men was due to the fact that he wanted Titus to come and spend the winter with him at Nicopolis. There were several different places called Nicopolis because that name means “city of victory.” A city was given that name because an important military victory had been won at that location. It is possible that this Nicopolis was the one in southern Greece because that meant that it was fairly close to the island of Crete. Paul also gave instructions regarding Zenas and Apollos and said to provide what they needed for the journey that they were taking.

Verse 14 gives a summary of why Paul wrote this book to Titus. It also helps us to clearly understand the goal that we have for our physical and spiritual children. We want to help our children learn to maintain good works. The word “learn” means *to increase one’s knowledge*. Here, we see that people do not automatically know how to serve the Lord. That is why we need to show them how to serve the Lord. The word that is translated “maintain” means *to set over or to lead*. Here, we see that we want to help our children learn to lead others to do good works that please the Lord and carry out His will. We see that the purpose of these good works is to meet “urgent needs” so that our children will not be unfruitful. Meeting the urgent needs of those who are not Christians provides an opportunity to share the Gospel with them. Christ fed both the 5,000 and the 4,000 because He saw an urgent need. Meeting the urgent needs of Christians helps them to see how the Lord supplies and gives opportunities to show the love of Christ to one another.

Paul concluded this letter by sending greetings from all of the Christians that were with him. He also told Titus to give his greetings to all of the Christians that knew him as he went to the various cities of Crete. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to practice good works.