

"THE GRACE OF GOD
HAS APPEARED,
TRAINING US TO DENY
UNGODLINESS AND
WORLDLY PASSIONS,
AND TO LIVE SELF-CONTROLLED,
UPRIGHT, AND GODLY LIVES."

TITUS 2:11-12

FALSE TEACHING
DISORDER
IMMORALITY
WORLDLY PASSIONS

INSTRUCTIONS
FOR A HEALTHY
CHURCH

- * SOUND DOCTRINE
- * QUALIFIED LEADERS
- * GOOD WORKS
- * GODLY LIVING
- * GRACE IN ACTION

THE SHEPHERD'S MANUAL

VERSE BY VERSE ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK OF TITUS

DR. PAUL CRAWFORD

Building Healthy Churches. Transforming Lives. Reflecting the Grace of God.

CHAPTER 1 LEADERSHIP & TRUTH



Correct false teaching.
Appoint qualified elders.
Establish healthy church order.

CHAPTER 2 LIVING THE DOCTRINE



Instructions for all ages and
roles—rooted in sound doctrine
that shapes everyday life.

CHAPTER 3 GRACE IN ACTION



Good deeds, submission,
kindness, and the work of
salvation through God's mercy.

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Dr. Paul Crawford

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Preface

Every book has a birthplace, and the birthplace of *The Shepherd's Manual* lies in a deep, burning conviction that the modern church is adrift. We live in an era captivated by novelty. We are told that to reach a changing culture, we must change our methods, our messaging, and perhaps even our standards. But as I look out across the landscape of contemporary ministry, I see a generation of leaders who are exhausted, running on the fumes of corporate strategies, and watching their flocks starve for lack of substance.

It was this burden that brought me back to the island of Crete—or rather, to the letter Paul wrote to the man tasked with taming it.

The Book of Titus has long been a sanctuary for my own soul. It is a remarkably compact letter—just forty-six verses—yet it carries the weight of an entire library on ecclesiology, leadership, and gospel-driven living. When Paul left Titus in Crete, he left him in an environment not unlike our own: cynical, morally untethered, and hostile to absolute truth. The solution Paul offered was not a new program, but a return to order, character, and sound doctrine.

This commentary is the fruit of years of study, prayer, and pastoral heartbeat. My goal in writing *The Shepherd's Manual* was not to deliver a detached, purely academic exercise, but to provide a functional, verse-by-verse tool for those in the trenches of ministry. I wanted to look at every single phrase through the lens of the text's original intent, and then bridge that truth directly into the twenty-first-century church.

You will find that this commentary does not skip the hard verses. We will dive deep into the strict qualifications for elders, the blunt confrontation of false teachers, and the intensely practical instructions for young and old alike. Throughout it all, my prayer is that you will see the beautiful, inseparable link that Paul establishes between what we *believe* and how we *live*.

To the pastors, elders, and ministry leaders picking up this volume: my heart is with you. The mandate to shepherd God's people is a heavy one, but you do not carry it alone.

It is my earnest hope that as you work through these pages, verse by verse, your conviction will be deepened, your theological spine will be strengthened, and your love for the local church will be set ablaze. May we stop looking to the world for our blueprints, and return to the simple, uncompromising pattern laid out for us in the Word of God.

— **Dr. Paul Crawford**

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Introduction

The Christian ministry is not a career to be managed; it is a stewardship to be guarded. In the modern church, leaders are bombarded with shifting cultural trends, corporate management models, and endless strategies for numeric growth. Yet, in the frantic search for what works, we often lose sight of what is true.

When the Apostle Paul left his young protégé Titus on the rugged, culturally chaotic island of Crete, he didn't send him a marketing strategy or a self-help guide. He sent him a letter. That letter, preserved for us as the Book of Titus, remains the definitive blueprint for church health, doctrinal integrity, and pastoral leadership.

Crete was a brutal assignment. The culture was notoriously hostile to the gospel—characterized by the Cretan poet Epimenides as a place of "liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons" (Titus 1:12). Sound doctrine was under siege by false teachers, and the fledgling churches lacked order. Titus's mandate was daunting: "set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city" (Titus 1:5). Paul's instructions were razor-sharp, practical, and uncompromising.

In *The Shepherd's Manual*, Dr. Paul Crawford provides a meticulous, verse-by-verse analysis of this vital pastoral epistle. Drawing from decades of pastoral experience and deep theological scholarship, Dr. Crawford unpacks the text with the precision of a theologian and the heart of a practitioner. He bridges the gap between first-century Crete and twenty-first-century ministry, demonstrating that the challenges we face today are remarkably similar to those faced by Titus.

This commentary is designed to be more than an academic exercise. It is a functional handbook for:

- **Pastors and Elders:** Seeking a biblical anchor for church governance, leadership qualifications, and managing conflict.
- **Ministry Leaders:** Looking to cultivate a culture of discipleship, intergenerational mentorship, and good works within the local body.
- **Everyday Believers:** Longing to understand how "the grace of God that bringeth salvation" practically trains us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

As you journey through these pages verse by verse, you will discover that sound doctrine is never merely intellectual—it is always intensely practical. It transforms how we lead, how we family, and how we witness to a watching world.

Whether you are a seasoned pastor looking to fortify your flock, a young leader stepping into ministry, or a student of the Word hungry for deeper truth, *The Shepherd's Manual* will challenge, convict, and equip you. Turn the page, open your Bible to Titus, and let the great Apostle remind you what it truly means to shepherd the flock of God.

Introduction to Titus Chapter 1

Set in Order What Remains: The Faith of God's Elect, the Qualified Elder, and the Cretan Liars

The letter to Titus is one of the three Pastoral Epistles, written by Paul to a trusted co-worker who has been left behind on the island of Crete with a specific and demanding assignment: to set in order what remains and to appoint elders in every town. Crete was a notoriously difficult mission field — the Cretans had a reputation in the ancient world for dishonesty so well established that the verb to cretanize meant to lie, and the noun Cretan was synonymous with liar. Titus has been left in this environment to complete the organizational and pastoral work that the church there desperately needs, and chapter 1 is Paul's foundational instruction for that work.

The chapter opens with one of the most theologically dense salutations in the Pauline corpus — a greeting that compresses an entire theology of apostleship, election, eternal purpose, and proclamation into two sentences before Paul has even named his recipient. The apostleship is for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, in the hope of eternal life that God, who never lies, promised before the ages began. This opening is not incidental throat-clearing. It is the theological foundation on which everything else in the letter — the qualifications for elders, the rebuke of the false teachers, the instructions for sound doctrine — will be built.

The chapter then moves to the practical heart of Titus's assignment: the qualifications for elders, given in language that closely parallels but is not identical to the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3. The elder must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, with believing children who are not open to debauchery or insubordination. And because an overseer is God's steward, he must be blameless, not arrogant, not quick-tempered, not a drunkard, not violent, not greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

The chapter closes with one of the most blunt and most theologically interesting passages in the New Testament: Paul's citation of the Cretan poet Epimenides — Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons — and his instruction that Titus rebuke them sharply, that they may become sound in the faith. The chapter ends with the indictment of those who profess to know God but deny him by their works, being detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work. The whole chapter moves from the theological foundation of the apostolic mission through the practical qualifications for godly leadership to the urgent confrontation of the corruption that godly leadership exists to address.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We come to Titus chapter 1 as people who need both the theological foundation and the practical instruction that this chapter provides. We need to understand, as Paul understood, that the work of the ministry is for the sake of the faith of Your elect and their knowledge of the truth that accords with godliness — not for the sake of institutional maintenance, not for the sake of personal advancement, not for the sake of any lesser purpose than the eternal life that You, who never lie, promised before the ages began.

Lord, give us leaders who meet the qualifications that this chapter sets out — leaders who are above reproach, self-controlled, upright, holy, disciplined, who hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught so that they can both encourage with sound doctrine and rebuke those who contradict it. And where we ourselves are called to leadership, conform us to this pattern. Let our households be in order. Let our character be blameless. Let our grip on the trustworthy word be firm enough to teach and firm enough to confront.

And give us the courage that Titus needed on Crete — the courage to name what needs naming, to rebuke sharply when sharp rebuke is what soundness in the faith requires, and to hold the line against those who profess to know You while denying You by their works. Let our profession and our works agree, so that we are not found among the detestable, disobedient, and unfit, but among the elect whose faith and whose knowledge of the truth this entire mission exists to serve.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Titus 1:1–4

The Apostolic Foundation: Election, Truth, and the Hope of Eternal Life Promised Before Time Began

*(1) Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ,
according to the faith of God's elect,
and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;
(2) In hope of eternal life,
which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;
(3) But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching,
which is committed unto me
according to the commandment of God our Saviour;
(4) To Titus, mine own son after the common faith:
Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.*

The Context

The opening of Titus is the most theologically loaded greeting in the Pauline corpus relative to its length. Paul identifies himself with a double title — servant of God and apostle of Jesus Christ — and then specifies the purpose of his apostleship with a precision that exceeds anything in his other letters: according to the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that accords with godliness. The apostolic ministry is not self-justifying. It exists for a purpose beyond itself: the faith of the elect and their knowledge of the truth. And that knowledge is qualified as the truth that accords with godliness — truth is not merely intellectual content to be affirmed but content that produces a particular kind of life. Sound doctrine and godly living are, from the opening sentence of this letter, inseparable.

The in hope of eternal life of verse 2 grounds the entire apostolic mission in the eschatological promise, and the promise is given the most secure possible foundation: which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began. The character of God as the one who cannot lie is the guarantee of the promise, and the promise itself predates creation — it was made before the ages began, which means the eternal life that the gospel offers is not a divine afterthought or improvisation in response to human sin, but part of the eternal purpose of God established before time itself. This is one of the most explicit statements in the New Testament of the pre-temporal divine plan of salvation.

Verse 3 traces the movement from the eternal promise to its historical manifestation: but at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior. The eternal promise has broken into history through proclamation, and Paul's own apostolic commission is the specific historical instrument of that manifestation. The phrase God our Savior is striking — Paul will use this title for both the Father (here) and for Christ (verse 4, and again later in the letter) without apparent concern to distinguish the persons sharply, which is itself a quiet but significant testimony to the deity of Christ embedded in the letter's opening.

The greeting to Titus in verse 4 — my true child in a common faith — echoes the language Paul uses for Timothy and establishes the personal relationship that grounds the authority of everything that follows. The grace, mercy, and peace is the standard Pauline blessing, but its placement after such a dense theological introduction means it arrives as the practical outworking of everything just stated: the grace, mercy, and peace flow from the God who does not lie and who has manifested His eternal promise in the gospel that Paul preaches and that Titus has been commissioned to establish on Crete.

Plain American English

From Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. My apostleship exists to build the faith of God's chosen people and to lead them into the knowledge of the truth that produces godly living — a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before time itself began. And now, at just the right time, he has revealed his message through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior. To Titus, my true son in the faith we share: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Key Observations

“According to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness”: This signifies **The Apostleship Exists for a Purpose Beyond Itself — Not Self-Justifying Authority but Service to the Faith and Godly Knowledge of God's Chosen People.**

Paul does not ground his apostolic authority in itself. He immediately states the purpose for which the authority exists: the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that accords with godliness. This is the model for every form of spiritual authority and leadership that the rest of the chapter will go on to describe: authority is never self-justifying in the New Testament pattern. It exists to serve the faith and the godly knowledge of those under its care. The elder qualifications that follow later in the chapter are not arbitrary requirements but flow directly from this principle — leadership must be qualified because leadership exists to serve a purpose that unqualified leadership cannot accomplish.

“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began”: This signifies **The Eternal Life That Grounds the Gospel Is Not a Divine Improvisation but Part of the Eternal Purpose of God Established Before Creation, Guaranteed by the Unlying Character of the One Who Promised It.**

The promised before the ages began is one of the most explicit statements in the New Testament of the pre-temporal divine plan, paralleling 2 Timothy 1:9's grace given us in Christ Jesus before the ages began. The security of this promise rests entirely on the character of the One who made it: God, who cannot lie. This is not a minor theological aside. In a letter addressed to a community surrounded by proverbial liars (as the chapter's closing verses will make explicit), the assertion that God cannot lie is a deliberate and

pointed contrast. The Cretan culture of falsehood is set against the God whose very nature makes deception impossible, and it is this unlying God's ancient promise that is the foundation of the hope Titus is commissioned to proclaim.

“Hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour”: This signifies **The Eternal Promise Breaks into History Through the Specific, Time-Bound Instrument of Apostolic Preaching — the Timeless Purpose of God Is Made Known Through the Temporal Act of Proclamation.**

The at the proper time of verse 3 is the hinge between eternity and history: the promise made before the ages is manifested in due time through preaching. This is the pattern of all biblical revelation — the eternal purpose of God does not remain abstract or hidden but breaks into specific historical moments through specific historical instruments. Paul's own apostleship is one such instrument, entrusted to him by the command of God our Savior. The phrase establishes that Paul's ministry is not self-appointed but commanded, which is the foundation for the authority he is about to exercise in commissioning Titus's work on Crete and in establishing the qualifications for elders that the rest of the chapter will set out.

What This Means for Us Today

1. Ground Every Exercise of Spiritual Authority in Its Purpose Rather Than in Itself: Paul's pattern of immediately stating the purpose of his apostleship — the faith and godly knowledge of God's elect — is the model for every form of ministry authority today. The pastor, the teacher, the elder, the parent exercising spiritual authority over children should be able to articulate clearly what that authority exists to serve. Authority that cannot account for its purpose, or that has begun to treat itself as the purpose, has drifted from the apostolic pattern. Ask regularly: what is this position of influence actually for? If the honest answer is institutional maintenance or personal standing rather than the faith and godly knowledge of those being served, the authority has lost its apostolic moorings.

2. Rest the Hope of Eternal Life on the Unlying Character of God Rather Than on the Fluctuating Confidence of Personal Feeling: The security of the eternal life promised before the ages began rests entirely on God's inability to lie, not on the strength of human faith or the consistency of human feeling. This is enormously practical pastoral theology: the believer whose assurance wavers should not be directed back to the quality of their own faith experience but to the character of the God who made the promise. The hope is secure because the Promiser cannot lie, not because the believer never doubts. This is the antidote to both presumption and despair — the ground of confidence is external to the believer's fluctuating spiritual state.

3. Recognize That Truth and Godliness Are Inseparable in the Apostolic Pattern, and Resist Any Theology That Separates Them: The truth which is after godliness establishes from the letter's first sentence that sound doctrine and godly living cannot be pulled apart. Theology that does not produce godliness has failed at the level of its purpose, no matter how technically correct its propositions. And godliness that is not grounded in truth is sentiment without substance. This integrated vision is the standard against which both academic theology divorced from life and emotional spirituality divorced from doctrine should be measured.

How This Relates to Today

The letter's opening insistence that God cannot lie speaks with particular force into a culture saturated with misinformation, spin, and the casual relationship to truth that characterizes much of contemporary

public discourse — not unlike the proverbial Cretan dishonesty that the chapter will later name directly. The church's confidence that it stands on promises made by a God incapable of deception is one of its most countercultural claims in an age of algorithmic manipulation and institutional distrust. This is not a minor doctrinal point but the foundation stone on which the entire letter's instructions about sound doctrine, qualified leadership, and confronting false teachers will be built.

The before the ages began grounding of eternal life also speaks to a contemporary spirituality that often treats salvation as a response to a felt need rather than the unfolding of an eternal purpose. The gospel Paul describes here is not primarily a solution invented to address the human predicament after the fact, but the historical manifestation of a purpose that predates creation itself. This reframes evangelism, discipleship, and the whole Christian life as participation in something far larger and more secure than any individual's spiritual journey.

Key Lesson: **The apostolic foundation of verses 1–4 establishes that ministry authority exists to serve the faith and godly knowledge of God's elect, that the hope of eternal life rests on the unlying character of the God who promised it before time began, and that this eternal promise has broken into history through the specific instrument of apostolic preaching — the theological bedrock on which every subsequent instruction in the letter, from the qualifications of elders to the rebuke of the Cretan liars, will be built.**

Titus 1:5–9

Set in Order What Remains: The Qualifications of the Elder Who Holds Firm to the Trustworthy Word

(5) *For this cause left I thee in Crete,
that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting,
and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:*
(6) *If any be blameless, the husband of one wife,
having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.*
(7) *For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God;
not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine,
no striker, not given to filthy lucre;*
(8) *But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men,
sober, just, holy, temperate;*
(9) *Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught,
that he may be able by sound doctrine
both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*

The Context

Verse 5 states Titus's commission with stark practicality after the theological density of the opening: set in order what remains and appoint elders in every town. The phrase set in order what remains suggests a work already begun but incomplete — churches that exist but lack the structure and leadership they need to be stable and sound. The plurality of elders in every town reflects the consistent New Testament pattern

of plural, local eldership rather than a single authority figure, and the as I directed you confirms that Titus is implementing Paul's prior instructions rather than improvising his own church order.

The qualifications that follow in verses 6–9 closely parallel 1 Timothy 3:1–7 but are not identical, and the differences are instructive. Titus's list begins with the domestic qualifications — blameless, husband of one wife, with believing children who are not open to debauchery or insubordination — before moving to the character qualifications. The emphasis on the children specifically being faithful (or believing) and not accused of debauchery reflects the particular pastoral concern in a culture, like Crete's, where moral laxity was proverbial: an elder whose own household exhibited the very disorder the culture was known for would have no credibility to confront it.

Verse 7 shifts to the term overseer (episkopos) used interchangeably with elder (presbyteros) in verse 5–6, confirming that these terms describe the same office viewed from different angles — elder emphasizing the maturity and dignity of the role, overseer emphasizing its function of oversight. The qualification as God's steward raises the stakes considerably: the overseer is not managing his own household or his own reputation but administering what belongs to God, which is why the list of disqualifying traits is so pointed — not arrogant, not quick-tempered, not a drunkard, not violent, not greedy for gain. Each of these is a way that a steward could abuse or neglect what has been entrusted to him rather than to himself.

Verse 8–9 turns to the positive qualifications, culminating in the most functionally important one: holding firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. This is the qualification that connects directly to the rest of the chapter and indeed the rest of the letter — the elder's primary functional task is the double-edged ministry of the word: positive instruction for the faithful and refutation for those who oppose sound teaching. Without this qualification, all the character qualifications, however admirable, would not equip a man for the specific work of eldership that Crete's situation required.

Plain American English

The reason I left you in Crete was so you could finish setting things in order and appoint elders in every town, just as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, and have children who believe and are not accused of wild living or rebellion. Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless — not arrogant, not quick-tempered, not a heavy drinker, not violent, not greedy for money. Instead, he should be hospitable, love what is good, be self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others with sound teaching and refute those who oppose it.

Key Observations

“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting”:
This signifies **Titus's Mission Is Specifically to Complete Unfinished Pastoral Work — Establishing the Pattern That Church Order and Qualified Leadership Are Not Optional Refinements but Necessary Completions of Gospel Work.**

The things that are wanting indicates churches that already exist through evangelistic work but that remain structurally and pastorally incomplete without ordained leadership. This is a significant ecclesiological principle: proclaiming the gospel and seeing converts is not the end of apostolic responsibility but only the beginning of it. The work is not finished until sound, qualified leadership is in place to sustain and protect what has been started. Crete's churches without elders are, in Paul's framing, unfinished work — vulnerable to exactly the kind of disorder and false teaching that the chapter's closing verses will describe.

“Having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly”: This signifies **The Domestic Qualification Reflects the Pastoral Principle That an Elder's Household Is the Visible Demonstration of Whether He Can Actually Manage and Shepherd Others — Particularly Pointed in a Culture Known for Moral Disorder.**

The requirement that an elder's children be believing and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination is not an arbitrary domestic standard but a direct test of the elder's capacity for the public office he seeks. If a man cannot establish order, faith, and godly character in the household over which he has the most direct and sustained influence, there is no reason to expect he can do so in the church. This logic becomes explicit in 1 Timothy 3:5 (if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church), and it carries particular weight in Crete, where the surrounding culture's reputation for unruliness makes a disordered Christian household indistinguishable from the pagan norm it should be contrasting with.

“For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God”: This signifies **The Overseer Is Not the Owner but the Steward of What Belongs to God — a Reframing That Raises the Stakes of Every Disqualifying Vice and Grounds the Entire Office in Accountability Rather Than Authority.**

Calling the overseer God's steward fundamentally reframes the nature of the office. A steward manages property and resources that belong to someone else and for which he will give account. This is why the list of vices that follow — arrogance, quick temper, drunkenness, violence, greed for gain — are so serious: each represents a different way a steward might treat what belongs to God as though it belonged to himself, using the position for personal gratification, personal vindication, personal comfort, or personal profit rather than for the care of what has been entrusted to him. The qualification list is not a character reference for promotion; it is a fitness test for trustworthy stewardship of something the steward does not own.

“Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers”: This signifies **The Culminating Qualification Is Functional Rather Than Merely Characterological — the Elder Must Be Equipped for the Specific Double Task of Positive Instruction and Active Refutation.**

Every other qualification in the list describes character; this final one describes competence — specifically, doctrinal competence sufficient for two distinct tasks: exhortation (positive instruction and encouragement in sound doctrine) and refutation (the active, reasoned confrontation of those who contradict it). This is the qualification most directly tied to the crisis the chapter is about to describe: a Crete full of empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party, requires elders who are not merely good men but doctrinally equipped men, able to do battle with error as well as build up the faithful. Character without doctrinal competence cannot meet Crete's specific need; doctrinal competence without character cannot be trusted with God's household. The office requires both.

What This Means for Us Today

1. Treat the Establishment of Qualified Leadership as Essential, Unfinished Gospel Work Rather Than an Optional Institutional Add-On: Titus's commission to set in order what remains is a reminder that evangelism without the subsequent establishment of qualified, doctrinally equipped leadership leaves the work incomplete. Churches, ministries, and Christian organizations that prioritize numerical growth or initial conversions while neglecting the development of qualified leaders are leaving Titus-shaped work undone. The hard, patient work of identifying, training, and appointing qualified leaders is not a lesser task than evangelism — in Paul's framing here, it is the necessary completion of it.

2. Examine Domestic Order as a Genuine, Not Merely Symbolic, Qualification for Spiritual Leadership: The requirement regarding an elder's household is not an outdated cultural artifact but a standing principle: the capacity to shepherd a church is tested first in the more intimate and demanding arena of one's own family. Candidates for spiritual leadership, and those currently serving in it, should examine their households honestly rather than compartmentalizing public ministry competence from private domestic chaos. A leader whose household contradicts the gospel he preaches has a credibility problem that no amount of public skill can overcome.

3. Hold Together Character and Doctrinal Competence as Equally Non-Negotiable Qualifications for Teaching Authority: The temptation in every generation is to prioritize one of these at the expense of the other — celebrating gifted communicators whose character is compromised, or installing morally upright but doctrinally unequipped leaders who cannot defend the faith against error. Titus 1 refuses this trade-off. The elder must hold fast the trustworthy word as taught and be blameless. Churches selecting and training leaders today should resist any process that screens for one of these qualifications while neglecting the other.

How This Relates to Today

The steward framing of pastoral office is a needed corrective in a contemporary culture that often celebrates ministry leaders as personal brands or independent authorities rather than as accountable managers of something that belongs to someone else. The steward language insists that every overseer will give an account, that the household being managed is not his, and that the vices specifically named — arrogance, quick temper, greed for gain — are precisely the vices that emerge when stewards begin to treat what they manage as their own possession. This has direct application to contemporary scandals involving financial exploitation, authoritarian leadership, and personality cults built around pastoral figures who have forgotten they are stewards rather than owners.

The qualification for doctrinal competence sufficient to refute opponents speaks pointedly into a contemporary pastoral culture that sometimes prizes relational warmth and communication skill above doctrinal substance and the willingness to confront error. Titus 1 will not allow a choice between being a good man and being doctrinally equipped to defend sound teaching; both are required of anyone who would hold the office of elder, and churches that have drifted toward selecting leaders for charisma alone, without testing their grasp of and commitment to sound doctrine, have departed from this apostolic standard.

Key Lesson: **The qualifications of verses 5–9 establish that the office of elder requires both unimpeachable character — demonstrated first in the order of one's own household — and doctrinal competence sufficient to both teach soundly and refute error, because the elder is not an owner exercising personal authority but a steward of God's household who will give account for how he has managed what was never his to begin with.**

Titus 1:10–16

The Cretan Liars and the Defiled Conscience: The Urgent Rebuke and the Profession That Denies Itself

*(10) For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers,
specially they of the circumcision:*

*(11) Whose mouths must be stopped,
who subvert whole houses,
teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.*

*(12) One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said,
The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.*

(13) This witness is true.

*Wherefore rebuke them sharply,
that they may be sound in the faith;*

*(14) Not giving heed to Jewish fables,
and commandments of men,
that turn from the truth.*

*(15) Unto the pure all things are pure:
but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving
is nothing pure;*

but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

*(16) They profess that they know God;
but in works they deny him,
being abominable, and disobedient,
and unto every reprobate work reprobate.*

The Context

Verse 10 names the urgent crisis behind the entire chapter: many people, especially those of the circumcision party (Jewish Christians insisting on continued adherence to Jewish law and practice), are insubordinate, empty talkers, and deceivers. This is the immediate reason Titus needs qualified elders capable of refutation — the false teachers are not a hypothetical future threat but a present, active problem subverting whole households. The phrase for shameful gain identifies their motive as financial: this is not principled theological disagreement but exploitation dressed in religious language.

Verse 12–13 contains the famous and startling citation: Paul quotes the Cretan poet Epimenides (a sixth-century BC figure regarded by some ancient sources as a prophet), who said Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons — and Paul adds, this testimony is true. This is one of the few places in Scripture where an apostle approvingly cites a pagan poet's blunt cultural generalization and affirms its accuracy. The point is not ethnic prejudice but pastoral realism: Titus is ministering in a specific cultural context with well-documented vices, and pretending otherwise would be useless. The instruction that follows —

rebuke them sharply — is calibrated to the actual severity of the situation rather than to an idealized picture of how confrontation should always proceed.

Verse 14 specifies the content of the error: Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. This connects to the circumcision party of verse 10 and to similar warnings in 1 Timothy about myths and genealogies. Verse 15 then states a principle with broad application: to the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. This appears to address a strand of false teaching imposing ritual purity restrictions, and Paul's response relocates the question of purity from external regulations to the internal condition of the mind and conscience — a defiled conscience corrupts the perception of everything, regardless of how scrupulously external regulations are followed.

The chapter closes with one of the most direct indictments in the Pastoral Epistles: they profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. This is the final and most damning diagnostic: profession of faith that is contradicted by conduct is not a minor inconsistency but an active denial. The chapter that opened with the theology of God's unlying character and the truth that accords with godliness closes with the indictment of those whose godliness has been entirely severed from their professed truth — the precise opposite of what the apostolic mission exists to produce.

Plain American English

For there are many rebellious people, full of empty talk and deception, especially those insisting on circumcision. They must be silenced, because they are upending whole households by teaching things they shouldn't for the sake of dishonest profit. One of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This statement is true! So rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will stop paying attention to Jewish myths and the commands of people who reject the truth. To the pure, everything is pure, but to those who are corrupted and unbelieving, nothing is pure — in fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. They claim to know God, but their actions deny it. They are detestable, disobedient, and worthless for doing anything good.

Key Observations

“Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake”: This signifies **The False Teachers Are Diagnosed Not Primarily as Sincere but Mistaken but as Knowingly Exploitative — Their Motive Is Identified as Financial Gain Disguised as Religious Teaching.**

Paul does not extend the charitable assumption of sincere error to these teachers. He identifies their motive directly: filthy lucre, shameful gain. This is teaching deployed as a means of financial exploitation, and it is devastatingly effective precisely because it subverts whole households — entire families destabilized by teaching that serves the teacher's profit rather than the household's good. The instruction to stop their mouths is correspondingly direct: this is not a situation calling for patient dialogue but for decisive silencing, because the teaching itself is functioning as a tool of harm rather than a sincere if flawed attempt at truth.

“One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true”: This signifies **Paul’s Approving Citation of a Pagan Poet’s Blunt Cultural Critique Establishes That Pastoral Realism About a Culture’s Actual Vices Is Sometimes More Useful Than Polite Avoidance of Uncomfortable Generalizations.**

This is a striking moment in Scripture: an apostle citing a non-believing poet’s harsh generalization about an entire culture and affirming, this testimony is true. Paul is not engaging in ethnic prejudice for its own sake but using an authoritative cultural voice (a prophet of their own) to establish a shared diagnostic baseline that Titus and the Cretan believers themselves would recognize as accurate. The pastoral point is that effective ministry requires honest assessment of the actual cultural conditions being addressed, not an idealized or diplomatically softened picture. Crete’s documented reputation for dishonesty, violence, and laziness is precisely the soil in which the false teachers’ deception and exploitation have taken root, and confronting it requires naming it accurately.

“Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith”: This signifies **The Sharp Rebuke Is Not an End in Itself but Has a Restorative Goal — the Severity of the Confrontation Is Calibrated to Produce Soundness, Not Merely to Punish or Humiliate.**

The instruction to rebuke sharply could be misread as simple harshness, but the purpose clause that follows it — that they may be sound in the faith — reveals the pastoral intention behind the severity. This is corrective, not punitive, rebuke. The sharpness is calibrated to the actual danger of the situation (households being subverted, deception spreading, the testimony of the church being undermined by visible hypocrisy) and aimed at restoration: soundness, not destruction. This models a form of confrontation that contemporary pastoral practice often shies away from — not because sharpness is always wrong, but because it requires the same restorative goal Paul specifies here, rather than mere venting of frustration or assertion of authority.

“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate”: This signifies **The Final Indictment Identifies the Precise Opposite of the Chapter’s Opening Vision — Profession Severed from Works Is Not Imperfect Faith but Active Denial, the Antithesis of Truth That Accords with Godliness.**

The chapter opened by defining the apostolic mission as service to the faith of God’s elect and the knowledge of the truth that accords with godliness — truth and godliness held inseparably together. The chapter closes by describing people in whom truth and godliness have been entirely severed: they profess to know God but deny him by their works. This is not described as weak or inconsistent faith but as active denial and unfitness for any good work. The diagnostic is severe because the stakes are severe: a profession of knowing God that produces no corresponding godliness is not a lesser version of true faith but its functional opposite, however orthodox the verbal profession may sound.

What This Means for Us Today

1. Discern the Difference Between Sincere Theological Disagreement and Teaching Deployed for Personal Gain, and Respond to Each Appropriately: Not every doctrinal dispute calls for the sharp rebuke Paul instructs here; this passage addresses teachers motivated by shameful gain who are actively subverting households. Contemporary churches navigating false teaching should ask the diagnostic question Paul asks: is this sincere error that calls for patient correction, or is this exploitation dressed in religious language that calls for decisive confrontation and, if necessary, the stopping of mouths? Misapplying gentle correction to predatory teaching, or harsh rebuke to honest theological difference, both fail the pastoral wisdom this passage models.

2. Assess Cultural and Institutional Contexts Honestly Rather Than with Diplomatic Softening, Because Effective Ministry Requires Accurate Diagnosis: Paul's willingness to cite and affirm a blunt cultural critique of Crete is a model for honest pastoral assessment rather than the conflict-avoidant diplomacy that often characterizes contemporary institutional life. Churches and Christian leaders ministering into specific cultural or organizational contexts — a workplace with a particular reputation, a community with documented patterns of dysfunction — are better served by Paul's blunt realism than by pretending the documented patterns do not exist. Naming the actual condition accurately is the precondition for ministering to it effectively.

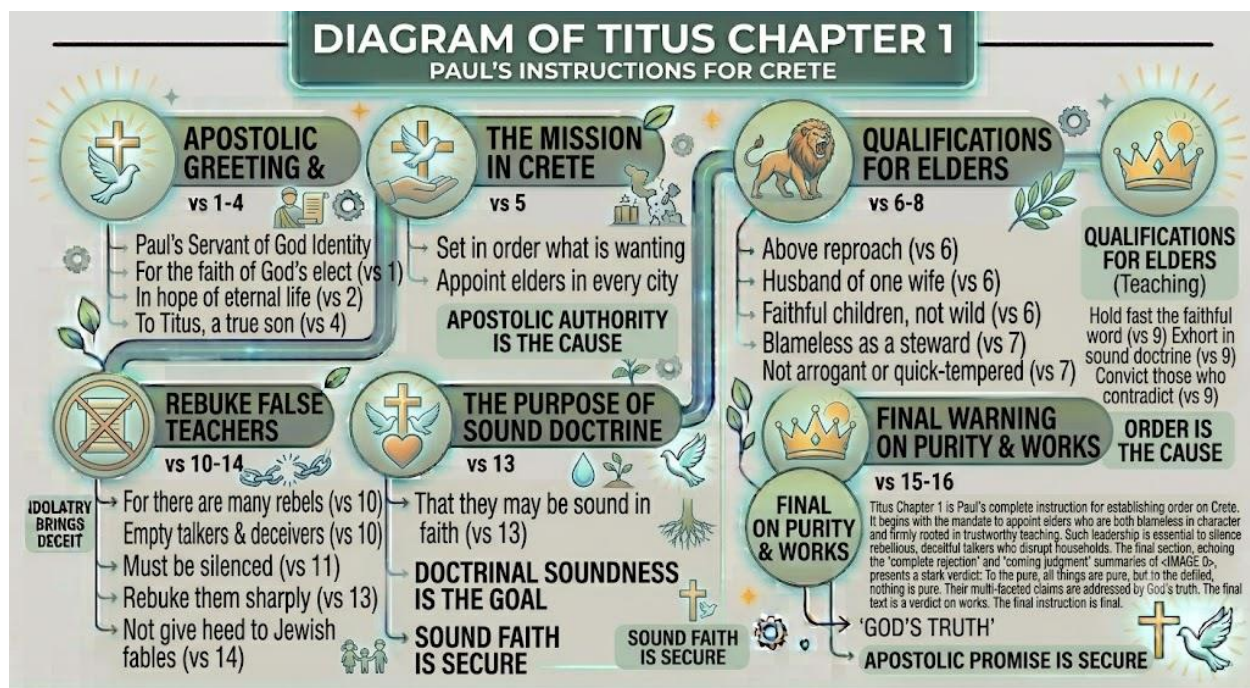
3. Examine Whether Profession and Works Agree in Your Own Life, Treating Any Gap Between Them as a Serious Matter Rather Than a Minor Inconsistency: The chapter's closing indictment — they profess to know God but deny him by their works — is a standing diagnostic question for every believer, not only for the false teachers in view. Regular self-examination should include this specific question: does my conduct affirm or deny what I profess to believe about God? The passage refuses to treat this gap as a minor or forgivable inconsistency; it identifies it as active denial. This should produce neither despair nor complacency but the kind of honest self-assessment that drives a believer back toward the truth that accords with godliness named in the chapter's opening verse.

How This Relates to Today

The identification of teaching motivated by shameful gain speaks with obvious relevance to the contemporary landscape of prosperity preaching, manipulative fundraising, and religious content monetized in ways that prioritize the teacher's profit over the hearer's good. Paul's instruction to stop their mouths — rather than simply outcompeting them with better content — suggests that churches bear responsibility for active confrontation of exploitative teaching, not merely passive provision of an alternative. This requires the doctrinal competence named in verse 9 and the courage modeled in verse 13.

The closing diagnostic of professed faith denied by works is a sobering mirror for any religious culture, including contemporary Western Christianity, in which public profession of belief is sometimes treated as the primary or even sole marker of authentic faith, with comparatively little scrutiny of whether conduct corresponds to profession. Titus 1 refuses this separation. A faith that is true to the apostolic pattern outlined in this chapter's opening verses is, by definition, a faith that produces the godliness that accords with truth — and any profession that does not produce this is, in Paul's blunt assessment, a form of denial rather than a form of faith.

Key Lesson: **The chapter closes with the urgent diagnosis that necessitates everything Paul has instructed: Crete is full of insubordinate, exploitative teachers subverting households for profit, operating in a culture honestly recognized for its own documented vices, and the solution is sharp rebuke aimed not at punishment but at restoring soundness in the faith — because the alternative, displayed in those who profess to know God while denying him by their works, is the precise antithesis of the truth that accords with godliness that the apostolic mission exists to produce.**



Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We close Titus chapter 1 having received both the theological foundation and the practical urgency of Paul's instruction to Titus. We have heard that the entire apostolic mission exists for the faith of Your elect and their knowledge of the truth that accords with godliness, grounded in the hope of eternal life that You, who cannot lie, promised before the ages began. Let that foundation hold firm in us. Let our confidence rest not on the fluctuations of our own feeling but on Your unlying character and Your eternal purpose.

Lord, raise up in us, and among us, leaders who meet the standard this chapter sets: blameless, with households in order, not arrogant or quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness or violence or greed, but hospitable, self-controlled, upright, holy, disciplined, and holding fast to the trustworthy word with enough doctrinal strength to both teach and refute. Where we are called to such leadership ourselves, conform us to this pattern, and give us the courage to confront error sharply when soundness in the faith requires it.

And examine us, Lord, by the chapter's closing diagnostic. We do not want to be among those who profess to know You while denying You by our works. Let our profession and our conduct agree. Let our minds and our consciences be pure rather than defiled, so that we may be fit, not unfit, for every good work — the very thing this entire letter and this entire apostolic mission exists to produce in us.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Introduction to Titus Chapter 2

Sound Doctrine and Adorned Lives: The Household Instructions, the Appearing of Grace, and the Redemption That Purifies a People

Titus chapter 2 is one of the most practically comprehensive and theologically grounded chapters in the entire Pauline corpus. If chapter 1 established the theological foundation and the qualifications for leadership, chapter 2 expands the vision to the entire household of faith — older men, older women, younger women, younger men, and bondservants — with specific instructions for each group, all drawn together by the most stunning theological statement in the letter: the grace of God that appeared for the salvation of all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

The structure of the chapter is deliberately community-shaped. Paul does not address only individuals in their private spiritual lives but groups within the household of the church, each with their own responsibilities and their own ways of adorning the gospel they profess. The older men are to model the maturity and dignity that is the fruit of a long covenant life. The older women are to be reverent in their behavior and to teach what is good, specifically training the younger women in the domestic virtues that stabilize households and honor the word of God. The younger men are to be self-controlled — the same virtue that appears in almost every category in the passage, which is telling. And the bondservants are to be well-pleasing to their masters, adorning the doctrine of God our Savior in everything.

The theological center of the chapter is the great grace passage of verses 11–14, which provides the doctrinal ground for every behavioral instruction that precedes it. The grace has appeared — it is historical and visible, not merely promissory. It trains — it is educative and formative, not merely declarative. It saves all people — it is universal in its scope of offer, not ethnically or socially restricted. It produces a specific life orientation: the renouncing of ungodliness and worldly passions, and the living of self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age. And it is eschatologically directed: we are waiting for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

The chapter closes with the charge to Titus himself: declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you. The instruction to Titus about his own posture in ministry — the authority he should exercise, the dignity he should maintain — closes a chapter that has been about the shape of the whole community's life. Titus is the one who must embody and enforce the standard the chapter has set for everyone else, and the closing charge is the reminder that the pastoral task is not only the formation of others but the maintenance of one's own integrity and authority in service of the gospel.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We come to Titus chapter 2 as the community that is the subject of its instructions — the household of faith that includes older men and older women and younger women and younger men and workers of every kind, each with a specific calling to live in a way that adorns the doctrine of God our Savior. We come asking not merely for theological understanding of the passage but for formation by it: that the grace which has appeared might do in us the training work that this chapter describes, renouncing ungodliness and worldly passions, living self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.

Lord, let the grace of God that appeared for the salvation of all people be received not merely as the declaration of our forgiveness but as the training force of our character. Let it teach us. Let it form us. Let it produce in us the self-control and the uprightness and the godliness that are the marks of the people who have been redeemed from all lawlessness and purified as God's own possession, zealous for good works. We want to be that people. Form us toward it.

And let the blessed hope of the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ be the eschatological anchor that holds the entire chapter's instruction in place. We are not living the self-controlled, upright, godly life as an end in itself. We are living it as the people who are waiting — whose whole present orientation is shaped by the certain expectation of the One who gave himself for us. Let the waiting be visible in the living.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Titus 2:1–10

Teach What Accords with Sound Doctrine: The Household Instructions for Every Group in the Community of Faith

- (1) But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:*
- (2) That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate,
sound in faith, in charity, in patience.*
- (3) The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour
as becometh holiness,
not false accusers, not given to much wine,
teachers of good things;*
- (4) That they may teach the young women
to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,*
- (5) To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good,
obedient to their own husbands,
that the word of God be not blasphemed.*
- (6) Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.*
- (7) In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works:
in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,*
- (8) 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.
(9) Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters,
and to please them well in all things;
not answering again;
(10) Not purloining,
but shewing all good fidelity;
that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

The Context

The opening verse — but as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine — is the deliberate contrast with the false teachers of chapter 1. They taught what they should not, for shameful gain. Titus is to teach what accords with sound doctrine. The but as for you (*su de*) is emphatic in the Greek, the first of several such emphatic contrasts in the letter. And the teaching that Titus is to deliver is not primarily theoretical instruction but behavioral formation — what accords with sound doctrine means teaching whose content shapes how people actually live. The doctrinal and the behavioral are, again, inseparable.

The instructions for older men in verse 2 give four qualities: sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. The sound in faith, love, and steadfastness echoes the Pauline triad of virtues (faith, love, hope in the form of steadfastness) and gives the older men's formation a specifically theological shape — not merely the maturity of age and experience, but the continuing vitality of the core Christian virtues. An older man who has grown cynical or cold or faithless has not achieved the maturity this verse describes; he has simply grown old.

The instructions for older women in verses 3–5 are notable for two things. First, the standard they are held to — reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not slaves to much wine, teachers of good — is recognizably the same kind of standard set for the elder in chapter 1 (not a drunkard, not a slanderer by implication). Older women in the church are expected to embody a character consistent with the teaching office they exercise informally in the community. Second, their primary arena of that teaching is the formation of younger women in the specific domestic virtues that stabilize households and prevent the word of God from being maligned. The phrase that the word of God may not be reviled is a missional argument: the visible coherence of Christian households is a form of witness.

The instruction to younger men in verse 6 is strikingly brief — urge the younger men to be self-controlled — before pivoting to instructions specifically for Titus himself (show yourself in all respects a model of good works, etc.). This structure implies that Titus, as a relatively young man in a leadership role, is himself the primary exhibit of what Paul is asking of younger men. His life is to be the argument for his teaching. The instructions for bondservants in verses 9–10 close the household section with the most explicit expression of the missional purpose running through the whole: that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. The verb adorn is a jeweler's word — the behavior of believers in every station of life is meant to display the gospel to its best advantage, like a jewel properly set.

Plain American English

But as for you, Titus, teach what fits with sound doctrine. Older men should be temperate, dignified, self-controlled, and strong in faith, love, and endurance. In the same way, teach older women to be reverent in the way they live — not to be gossips or heavy drinkers, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will look down on the word of God. Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything, set yourself as an example of doing what is good. In your teaching, show integrity, seriousness, and sound, unobjectionable speech, so that those who oppose you will be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us. Tell those who are enslaved to be submissive to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to back-talk them, and not to steal from them, but to show complete and perfect faithfulness, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.

Key Observations

“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine”: This signifies **The Chapter’s Opening Establishes That Sound Doctrine Has a Specific Shape That It Produces in Human Lives — the Doctrine Is Sound Precisely Because It Generates the Behavioral Formation That the Following Verses Describe.**

The things that accord with sound doctrine are not, in this chapter, a list of theological propositions to be affirmed. They are the specific behavioral patterns that healthy doctrine produces in the lives of those who receive it — the sobriety of the older man, the reverence of the older woman, the self-control of the younger man, the fidelity of the bondservant. Paul’s concept of sound doctrine is inherently transformative: doctrine that produces no change in life is, by this standard, not healthy. This is the opposite of a purely intellectual or propositional understanding of doctrinal orthodoxy.

“That the word of God be not blasphemed”: This signifies **The Missional Stakes of Domestic Order Are Explicitly Named — the Visible Coherence or Incoherence of Christian Households Directly Affects the Credibility of the Gospel in the Surrounding Culture.**

The fact that the word of God may not be reviled at the end of the instructions for younger women reveals the missional rationale embedded in what might otherwise appear to be private domestic advice. The conduct of Christian households in a non-Christian environment is a form of public testimony. When that conduct is indistinguishable from the surrounding culture’s disorder, or when it actually produces greater disorder, the gospel that is being preached is actively contradicted by the community’s visible life. This principle runs through the entire household code: the motive for each instruction is never mere social conformity or cultural decency but the integrity of the gospel’s witness.

“That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things”: This signifies **The Jeweler’s Metaphor of Adorning the Doctrine Is the Most Vivid Available Statement of the Relationship Between Conduct and Proclamation — the Lives of Believers Are the Setting in Which the Gospel’s Beauty Is Made Visible.**

The verb to adorn (*kosmeo*, the root of the word *cosmos* and our word *cosmetic*) is the jeweler’s term for setting a gem to display it to maximum advantage. When applied to the doctrine of God our Savior, it transforms the behavioral instructions of the entire passage into an aesthetic claim: the lives of believers are meant to be the setting that shows the gospel to best advantage. A bondservant who is fully trustworthy, not pilfering, entirely faithful, is adorning the doctrine of God our Savior in the same way that a jeweler adorns the gem by setting it properly. This is one of the most beautiful and one of the most demanding descriptions of Christian witness available in the New Testament.

“In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned”: This signifies **Titus Is to Be the Living Exhibit of What He Is Teaching — the Teacher’s Life Is Not Separable from the Teacher’s Doctrine, and the Coherence of Both Is the Primary Defense Against Those Who Would Oppose the Ministry.**

The instructions for Titus himself — embedded in the middle of the instructions for younger men — establish that the most powerful form of Titus’s teaching is his own life. In all respects be a model of good works. The Greek word for model (tupos) is the word for a mold or die — the thing that impresses its shape on the material it presses into. Titus is to be the mold from which younger men’s character is being shaped. This is not a claim about his personal perfection but about the intentional, consistent embodiment of the gospel he teaches. And the practical defense it provides is named: those who oppose you will be put to shame, because they have nothing evil to say about us. The life that matches the doctrine disarms its most predictable critics.

What This Means for Us Today

1. Understand That Sound Doctrine Is Assessed by Whether It Produces Sound Formation, Not Only Whether It Passes Propositional Tests: The chapter’s opening — teach what accords with sound doctrine — followed immediately by behavioral instructions reveals Paul’s working definition of doctrinal soundness: doctrine is sound when it produces the life it describes. Churches and theological institutions that pride themselves on doctrinal precision while producing graduates or members who are self-controlled only in their theology rather than in their actual lives have separated what Paul holds together. Sound doctrine produces sober older men, reverent older women, self-controlled young men, faithful workers. If it is not producing these, the question is not only whether the doctrine is correct but whether it is actually functioning as doctrine in the lives of those who profess it.

2. Receive the Missional Argument for Domestic and Workplace Faithfulness as One of the Most Concrete Available Forms of Gospel Witness: The fact that the word of God may not be reviled and the adorning of the doctrine of God our Savior are explicit missional arguments embedded in what might otherwise appear to be merely private or domestic behavioral advice. The coherence of Christian household life, the trustworthiness of Christian workers, the dignity of Christian older people — these are all public testimonies to the gospel, and their absence or contradiction is a public counter-testimony. Contemporary Christians who treat the domestic, professional, and social dimensions of their lives as private spheres insulated from the gospel’s public witness have missed the missional logic of this entire passage.

3. Be a Pattern Before Being a Teacher, Recognizing That the Most Powerful Argument for What You Teach Is the Life You Live: The instruction for Titus to be a model of good works, with uncorrupt teaching, dignified conduct, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, establishes the principle that the teacher’s life is always part of the teaching. The coherence between a teacher’s doctrine and their conduct is the primary defense against those who would malign the ministry. Contemporary teachers, preachers, and leaders who invest heavily in the quality of their public communication while neglecting the quality of their private formation have reversed the priority that Paul establishes here: the model comes before the argument, and the model is the strongest available argument.

How This Relates to Today

The household instructions of Titus 2 have sometimes been controversial in contemporary settings because they address specific groups with specific instructions, including older women training younger women in domestic virtues and bondservants being subject to their masters. The pastoral wisdom of reading these instructions in their first-century Cretan context — where the alternative was the proverbial Cretan disorder the letter has already named, and where the visible coherence of Christian households was a primary form of witness — does not dissolve their enduring claim but does locate it properly. The underlying principle — that the visible shape of Christian communities should adorn rather than malign the gospel they proclaim — applies with full force to every contemporary context.

The specific identification of older women as the primary teachers of younger women in the domestic sphere is one of the most practically neglected principles in contemporary church life, which has largely replaced this kind of mentored, relational formation with the same programmatic approach it applies to all age groups. The chapter envisions a community in which wisdom is transmitted generationally and relationally, not merely institutionally, and in which the older members of the community take active responsibility for the formation of the younger. Recovering this vision is one of the most concrete applications the chapter offers to contemporary church practice.

Key Lesson: **The household instructions of verses 1–10 establish that sound doctrine produces specific behavioral formation in every group within the community of faith, that the visible coherence of Christian households and workers is a direct form of gospel witness that can either adorn or malign the doctrine of God our Savior, and that the teacher’s own life is the primary exhibit of what the teaching claims — the model that either vindicates or undermines the doctrine it represents.**

Titus 2:11–14

The Grace That Appeared: The Doctrinal Ground of All Behavioral Formation and the Eschatological Horizon of the Purified People

(11) *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation
hath appeared to all men,*
(12) *Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,
we should live soberly, righteously, and godly,
in this present world;*
(13) *Looking for that blessed hope,
and the glorious appearing
of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;*
(14) *Who gave himself for us,
that he might redeem us from all iniquity,
and purify unto himself a peculiar people,
zealous of good works.*

The Context

Verses 11–14 are the theological engine of the entire chapter. The behavioral instructions of verses 1–10 have told the community what to do; verses 11–14 explain why, grounding every behavioral instruction in the character of the grace that has appeared, the hope of the appearing that is coming, and the purpose of the redemption that lies behind both. The for of verse 11 is causal: all of the behavioral formation described in the preceding verses is being done for this reason — the grace of God has appeared, training us in a specific way of life while we wait for the appearing of glory.

The grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all people is the incarnation and the cross stated with maximum compactness. The appeared is the word *epiphanē* — the word that gives us epiphany, the breaking-in of something from outside. The grace is not a concept or a principle; it has appeared, manifested, broken into history in a specific event. The training dimension of verse 12 is remarkable: the grace itself teaches. It is not merely the ground of forgiveness but the formative force of a new way of living. And what it teaches is both negative and positive: denying ungodliness and worldly passions (the renunciation side) and living self-controlled, upright, and godly in the present age (the positive side).

The eschatological orientation of verse 13 gives the present-age formation its proper frame: looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. The self-controlled, upright, godly life is the life of a community waiting. The present-age behavior is calibrated by the future-age expectation. The phrase our great God and Savior Jesus Christ is one of the clearest confessions of Christ's full deity in the Pauline letters — the singular the great God and Savior applies both terms to the same person, Jesus Christ, not splitting God and Savior between the Father and the Son as some later interpretations would require.

Verse 14 gives the purpose of Christ's self-giving: to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. The redemption has a twin objective — liberation from lawlessness and the creation of a particular people. The purification and the zeal for good works are not optional additions to the salvation; they are stated as its purpose. A salvation that produces no purification and no zeal for good works has not accomplished what verse 14 says Christ gave himself to accomplish. And the zealous for good works brings the passage full circle: the grace that appeared (verse 11) produces the good works that the grace was training toward (verse 12), in the people who are waiting for the appearing of glory (verse 13), because the purpose of the redemption was precisely this people (verse 14).

Plain American English

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives right now, in this present age, while we wait for the joyful hope — the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people who are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Key Observations

“The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us”: This signifies **The Grace Is Not Only Declared but Educative and Formative — It Does Not Merely Announce**

Forgiveness but Actively Trains Those Who Receive It in the Specific Pattern of Life the Passage Describes.

The word translated teaching (paideuoussa) is the Greek word for the education of children by a tutor — the sustained, formative, disciplinary instruction that shapes character rather than merely conveying information. Grace, in Paul's framing here, is not a static declaration of pardon but a dynamic formative force that actively shapes the life of those who have received it. This is the strongest available New Testament statement that grace and behavioral formation are not alternatives — more grace does not produce less concern for conduct, but more. The grace is precisely the teacher of the godly life it produces. This has direct implications for any version of Christian faith that treats grace as permission for moral indifference.

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”: This signifies The Eschatological Horizon Is Not an Addendum to the Present-Age Ethics but the Frame Within Which They Make Sense — the Self-Controlled, Upright, Godly Life Is the Life of People Who Are Specifically Waiting for a Specific Appearing.

The looking for (prosdechomai — waiting with expectation) is not a passive disposition but an active orientation of the whole life toward the expected event. The present-age ethics of self-control, uprightness, and godliness are explicitly connected to this eschatological waiting: we live this way in this present age while we wait for the appearing. The eschatological hope is not escapism but the very motivation and calibration of the present-age life. Remove the blessed hope from the picture and the behavioral instructions of the chapter lose their eschatological frame and become a mere moralistic code. Keep the hope in view and the instructions become the natural posture of the community that is oriented toward the One who is coming.

“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works”: This signifies The Purpose of the Redemption Is Explicitly the Creation of a Purified and Zealous People — Salvation That Does Not Produce Purification and Zeal for Good Works Has Failed to Accomplish What Christ Gave Himself to Accomplish.

The gave himself and the purpose expressed in the that clause establishes the clearest possible connection between redemption and the expected outcome of redemption. Christ did not give himself simply to forgive sins in a way that leaves the sinner unchanged, nor simply to rescue from hell in a way that leaves the conduct of the present life unaffected. He gave himself to redeem from all lawlessness — liberation from sin's dominion — and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are eager to do good. The zealous for good works is not an add-on to salvation but its stated purpose. A community that is not becoming more eager for good works has not been failing to add something to their salvation; they have been failing to experience what their salvation was for.

“The great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”: This signifies This Is One of the Clearest Confessions of Christ's Full Deity in the Pauline Letters — the Singular Definite Article Linking Great God and Savior to the Same Person, Jesus Christ.

The Greek construction of verse 13 is one of the strongest available linguistic supports for the full deity of Christ in Paul's letters. The single definite article (the) governs both great God and Savior, linking them grammatically to the single referent Jesus Christ. This is the Granville Sharp rule applied to a theologically decisive passage: the great God and our Savior are not being distinguished (as if God the Father and Jesus Christ were separately in view) but identified as the single referent to whom the appearance belongs. Paul is confessing that the appearing they are waiting for is the appearing of Jesus

Christ who is the great God and Savior — one of the clearest high-Christological declarations in the Pastoral Epistles.

What This Means for Us Today

1. Receive the Grace of God as Formative and Educative, Not Only Declarative, and Resist Any Version of Grace That Treats It as Permission for Moral Disengagement: The grace that teaches is one of the most important theological correctives available to the antinomian distortion of grace that treats it primarily as liberation from moral expectations. Paul's grace is not the enemy of the transformed life but its primary teacher. The person who uses the language of grace to excuse the absence of the renunciation of ungodliness and worldly passions has not understood the grace that has appeared. The grace that appeared teaches exactly those renunciations. More grace — properly received — produces more formation, not less.

2. Maintain the Eschatological Frame as the Motivation and Calibration of Present-Age Conduct: The looking for the blessed hope is not an invitation to spiritual escapism that neglects the present age but the eschatological orientation that gives the present-age life its proper shape. The community waiting for the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ lives differently than the community that has lost that expectation. The specific behavioral instructions of verses 1–10 are the natural posture of people who know who is coming and who want their lives to reflect the character of the one they are waiting for. Losing the eschatological horizon flattens the behavioral instructions into mere moralism; restoring it gives them their proper evangelical shape.

3. Take Seriously That the Stated Purpose of Christ's Self-Giving Was the Creation of a Purified and Zealous People, and Measure the Health of Your Community Accordingly: The that he might purify for himself a people for his own possession who are eager for good works is not a description of an optional advanced stage of the Christian life. It is the stated purpose of the redemption. Churches and believers who are not moving toward greater purification and greater eagerness for good works are not merely failing to reach the advanced levels of sanctification; they are failing to experience the purpose for which Christ gave himself. This should produce neither despair nor mere striving but the honest assessment that leads to the confession and the renewed reception of the grace that teaches.

How This Relates to Today

The grace that appeared for the salvation of all people — not for a particular ethnicity, social class, or legal status — is a direct challenge to every version of the gospel that restricts the offer of salvation or the formative community of faith to particular groups. Paul has just given instructions to older men, older women, younger women, younger men, and bondservants without suggesting that any of these groups are outside the reach of the grace that appeared or the formation it produces. The household of faith that the grace creates is socially and generationally diverse, and the formative work of the grace that appeared applies to every member of it.

The high Christology of verse 13 — the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ — is not merely a doctrinal point for academic theology. It is the christological claim that gives the entire chapter its weight. If the one who is coming is the great God and Savior, then the life being lived in expectation of that appearing is not merely the life calibrated to a religious ideal but the life oriented toward a person who is God. The self-control, the uprightness, the godliness, the eagerness for good

works — all of it is the posture of people who know who is coming and who are shaping their whole present lives in light of that knowledge.

Key Lesson: **The grace of God that appeared brings salvation to all people and trains those who receive it in a life of renounced ungodliness and self-controlled, upright, godly living in the present age, while orienting the whole community toward the blessed hope of the appearing of the great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself to redeem from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are eager for good works — the doctrinal ground that makes every behavioral instruction in the chapter intelligible, urgent, and achievable.**

Titus 2:15

Declare These Things: The Charge to Titus and the Authority of the Gospel Ministry

*(15) These things speak, and exhort,
and rebuke with all authority.
Let no man despise thee.*

The Context

The final verse of the chapter is the charge to Titus himself, and it is the shortest of the three sections but not the least important. After the comprehensive community formation of verses 1–10 and the dense theological grounding of verses 11–14, the chapter closes by returning to the minister. The these things refer to the entire preceding content of the chapter — everything from the behavioral instructions for each group to the great grace passage. Titus is to declare all of it, exhort with all of it, and rebuke with the authority of all of it.

The three verbs — declare, exhort, rebuke — map the full range of the preaching ministry. Declare establishes the content: this is what is true. Exhort addresses the will: this is what you should do in light of what is true. Rebuke corrects the wayward: this is where you have departed from what is true and what is required. Together, they describe a ministry of the word that is neither merely informational (declare only), nor merely motivational (exhort only), nor merely corrective (rebuke only), but comprehensively pastoral in the fullest sense.

The with all authority is the authorization for a ministry that will inevitably face resistance. Titus is in an environment where the authority of sound doctrine is being challenged by false teachers (chapter 1) and where the call to behavioral formation may be resisted by those comfortable with the surrounding culture's norms. The authority Paul is investing in Titus is not personal authority — not the authority of his personality or his institutional position — but the authority of the gospel he proclaims. And the let no one disregard you is the charge that Titus must not allow his youth (implied by the earlier instructions about being a model for younger men) or the cultural pressures of Crete to erode the authority with which he exercises the ministry.

Plain American English

Declare these things, encourage people with them, and correct those who go wrong — with full authority. Don't let anyone look down on you.

Key Observations

“These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority”: This signifies **The Three Verbs of Ministry Describe the Full Range of the Pastoral Task — Proclamation That Establishes Truth, Exhortation That Applies It to the Will, and Rebuke That Corrects Departure from It.**

The three-verb structure of verse 15 is the most concentrated description of the pastoral ministry available in the letter. Declare (laleo) is the basic act of speaking, of making the content known. Exhort (parakaleo) is the application of the content to the will and the life — the urgent, caring call to respond. Rebuke (elencho) is the confrontation of what is wrong — the naming of departure from truth and the call to correction. A ministry that only declares produces informed spectators. A ministry that only exhorts produces emotionally engaged but potentially ill-informed responders. A ministry that only rebukes produces defensive and discouraged people. All three together, with equal weight and authority, is the model Titus is being given.

“Let no man despise thee”: This signifies **The Charge to Maintain Ministerial Authority Is the Practical Outworking of the Life-Before-Teaching Principle — Authority Is Not Claimed Verbally but Earned Behaviorally, Rooted in the Integrity the Chapter Has Been Describing.**

The let no one disregard you is not a command to assert personal status but a call to live in such a way that disregard becomes impossible. In the context of chapter 2, the means by which Titus's authority is protected is not the force of his personality or the assertion of his institutional role, but the coherence of his life with the teaching he delivers — the model of good works, the uncorrupt doctrine, the dignity and sound speech of verses 7–8 that give opponents nothing evil to say. This connects the closing verse back to the earlier description of Titus himself: his authority as a minister of the gospel is inseparable from his embodiment of the gospel.

What This Means for Us Today

1. Practice All Three Modes of the Pastoral Ministry Rather Than Defaulting to the One That Feels Most Natural or Encounters the Least Resistance: Every pastoral personality tends to one of these three modes. The doctrinally oriented pastor defaults to declaration and may neglect exhortation or avoid rebuke. The relationally warm pastor defaults to exhortation and may lack the courage for rebuke or the structure for clear declaration. The prophetically gifted pastor defaults to rebuke and may exhaust the congregation without the sustaining balance of declaration and encouragement. Titus's charge names all three as equally necessary and equally part of the pastoral commission. Identifying one's default and deliberately cultivating the neglected modes is one of the most concrete applications this verse offers.

2. Protect Ministerial Authority by Embodying What You Teach Rather Than by Asserting the Authority Verbally: The let no one disregard you in the context of the chapter's prior instructions implies that the protection of ministerial authority is primarily behavioral rather than positional. Titus is not being told to remind people of his apostolic credentials or institutional standing; he has been told to be a model of good works with uncorrupt teaching and sound speech that cannot be condemned. The authority that withstands contempt is the authority of the coherent life, not the asserted claim.

Contemporary ministers who find their authority challenged should examine the coherence of their life before they examine the adequacy of their arguments.

How This Relates to Today

The let no one disregard you is a particularly relevant charge for young ministers, women in ministry contexts, and anyone whose authority is likely to be challenged on demographic rather than doctrinal grounds. Paul's instruction is not to assert credentials more loudly but to live in such a way that the challenge loses its purchase. This is simultaneously more demanding and more powerful than institutional credentialing — the life that matches the teaching is the argument that cannot be answered with contempt because it has removed the basis for the contempt.

The three-verb structure also reflects a vision of preaching and teaching ministry that is richer and more demanding than many contemporary homiletical models allow. A culture of pulpit communication shaped primarily by entertainment values tends to collapse all three modes into exhortation at best — the motivating, affirming, emotionally engaging communication that avoids the confrontation of rebuke and the sustained intellectual labor of declaration. Titus's charge invites contemporary ministers to recover the full-orbed ministry that the apostolic pattern describes.

Key Lesson: **The closing charge to Titus — declare these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority, letting no one disregard you — describes a three-mode ministry of proclamation, application, and correction that is rooted not in the assertion of personal or institutional authority but in the coherence of the minister's own life with the teaching he delivers, the model of good works that vindicates the doctrine by making disregard impossible.**

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We close Titus chapter 2 having received the most complete available account of what it looks like when sound doctrine produces sound community. We have seen the older men and women and the younger women and men and the workers — every group given its specific formation, every group charged with adorning the doctrine of God our Savior in the way that befits their station. We have received the great grace passage that grounds it all: the grace that appeared, that teaches, that looks toward the appearing of the great God and Savior. And we have received the pastoral charge that closes it: declare, exhort, rebuke, let no one disregard you.

Lord, let the grace that has appeared be our teacher. Not a permission for indifference but a formation toward godliness. Let it teach us the renunciation of ungodliness and worldly passions. Let it train us in self-control and uprightness and godliness in this present age. And let the blessed hope of the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ be the eschatological anchor that gives the whole present life its proper shape — the posture of a community that knows who is coming and is living in light of that knowledge.

Let us be the purified people, zealous for good works, that You redeemed us to be. Not merely forgiven but formed. Not merely declared righteous but becoming righteous in the shape of daily life. Let our households, our workplaces, our communities, and our churches be the settings that display the gospel's beauty — the jewel properly set, the doctrine of God our Savior adorned in all things. And let those who minister among us have the courage to declare and exhort and rebuke with all authority, in lives coherent enough that no one has anything evil to say.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Introduction to Titus Chapter 3

The Washing of Regeneration, the Good Works That Are Excellent and Profitable, and the Final Pastoral Instructions

Titus chapter 3 is the concluding chapter of the letter and brings together the three great themes that have been running through the entire epistle: the relationship between the community of faith and the surrounding world, the theological foundation of the gospel, and the practical instruction for pastoral leadership. The chapter is remarkable for the theological density of its central passage — verses 4–7, which constitute one of the most compressed and theologically comprehensive summaries of the gospel in Paul's letters — and for the pastoral practicality of the instructions that surround it.

The chapter opens with instructions for the community's civic life: be submissive to rulers and authorities, obey, be ready for every good work, speak evil of no one, avoid quarreling, be gentle, show perfect courtesy toward all people. This is followed by the most bracing humility-grounding available: 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. The before-and-after contrast is not drawn to produce self-congratulation in the community that has been changed, but to produce the kind of humble, patient, gentle engagement with those outside the community that only people who remember where they themselves came from can truly sustain.

The great but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared of verse 4 is the pivot that parallels chapter 2's the grace of God has appeared. The goodness and the loving kindness (philanthropia, literally the love of humanity) of God broke into history in the appearing of the Savior, and the theological statement that follows in verses 4–7 is the most concentrated Trinitarian soteriology in the Pastoral Epistles: not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing 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 chapter then pivots sharply back to the practical: these things I want you to insist on, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. The faithful saying of verse 8, insisting on the connection between sound theology and good works, is followed by an equally insistent warning against foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, which Paul declares are unprofitable and worthless. The person who stirs up division after two warnings is to be rejected as warped and self-condemned. The letter closes with personal instructions about Artemas, Tychicus, Zenas, Apollos, and the Cretan community, and the final verse restates the letter's

central concern one last time: and let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We come to Titus chapter 3 as people who need the humility that the opening verses are designed to produce. We were once foolish. We were once disobedient, led astray, enslaved to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. Let that memory be the permanent medicine against contempt for those outside the community of faith, and against the kind of quarrelsome engagement with the world around us that the chapter explicitly warns against.

Lord, let the great but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared be the pivot that it was for us, as it was for Paul — the moment when the direction of everything changed. Not because of anything we did in righteousness, but according to Your mercy, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, poured out richly through Jesus Christ our Savior. Let the fullness of that Trinitarian saving act be received and treasured rather than domesticated into a merely formulaic confession.

And let the justified heirs who have received this lavish salvation be, precisely because of it, the people most devoted to good works, most gentle with outsiders, most patient with the foolish quarrels that waste what the gospel has produced. Let the insistence on good works that ends this chapter be the practical shape of gratitude for the mercy that began it. Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Titus 3:1–3

Civic Virtue, Remembered Depravity, and the Humility That Produces Gentle Engagement with the World

- (1) Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,*
- (2) To speak evil of no one, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.*
- (3) For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures,*

*living in malice and envy,
hateful, and hating one another.*

The Context

The opening instructions of chapter 3 address the community's relationship with civic authority and with the broader society — the world outside the household of faith. The be submissive to rulers and authorities, obey, be ready for every good work follows directly from the close of chapter 2 (declare these things, exhort, rebuke) and extends the range of the community's formation from its internal life to its external engagement. The instructions are not politically sophisticated in the modern sense — they are not about the limits of governmental authority or the theology of civil disobedience — but about the default posture of the believing community toward the society it inhabits.

The speak evil of no one, avoid quarreling, be gentle, showing perfect courtesy toward all people of verse 2 is the specification of the civic disposition that the community should cultivate. The all people is important: this is not restricted to fellow believers but applies to the entire range of human beings the community encounters. In the Cretan context, where the surrounding culture was proverbially given to dishonesty and violence, the community's gentleness and courtesy would have been as countercultural as it was missionally significant.

Verse 3 is the most powerful motivating clause in the passage and among the most honest self-assessments in Paul's letters. The 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 is not a general anthropological observation about what non-Christians are like. It is a first-person plural confession: this is what we were. Paul includes himself and every member of the community of faith in the pre-conversion description. The effect is to make the commanded gentleness toward outsiders not a matter of condescension from those who have arrived toward those who have not, but the humbled gratitude of those who know exactly where they themselves were before the mercy of verse 4 intervened.

Plain American English

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak maliciously about no one, to be peaceable and gentle, and to show complete courtesy to everyone. For we ourselves were once stupid, disobedient, and deceived — slaves to all kinds of desires and pleasures, living in spite and jealousy, hated by others and hating each other.

Key Observations

“To speak evil of no one, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men”: This signifies **The Civic Virtue Being Required of the Community Is Explicitly Universal in Its Scope — All People, Including Those Outside the Community of Faith, Are the Recipients of the Gentleness and Courtesy That the Gospel Shapes.**

The all people of verse 2 ensures that the commanded gentleness and courtesy are not simply communal virtues practiced within the household of faith toward fellow believers, but postures that extend to the

entire range of human beings the community encounters in its civic life. This is pastorally important because the temptation of sectarian communities — then and now — is to reserve their gentleness for insiders while treating outsiders with contempt or combativeness. The Cretan context, where the false teachers were engaged in controversy and the culture was proverbially quarrelsome, makes this instruction particularly pointed: the community is to be distinguishably different in its civic engagement, not by withdrawal from the public sphere but by a quality of engagement that reflects the gospel it proclaims.

“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another”: This signifies **The First-Person Plural Confession of the Pre-Conversion Condition Is the Most Powerful Available Motivation for the Commanded Gentleness — Those Who Remember Where They Were Cannot Sustain Contempt for Those Who Are Still There.**

The for we ourselves were once is the theological engine of the civic virtue commanded in verses 1–2. It is not an external command to be gentle with outsiders as a strategic communication choice. It is the memory of a shared condition that makes contempt for those in that condition impossible for the person who has honestly received the memory. The person who has genuinely confronted the fact that they were once foolish, disobedient, enslaved, malicious, and full of hatred cannot regard someone else in that condition with anything other than the compassion born of recognition. The list in verse 3 is deliberately comprehensive — covering intellectual failure (foolish, deceived), moral failure (disobedient, slaves to passions), relational failure (malice, envy), and social failure (hated and hating) — to ensure that no member of the community has a category of former sin that exempts them from the humbling recognition.

What This Means for Us Today

1. Cultivate the Civic Engagement That Is Shaped by the Gospel Rather Than by the Culture’s Default Combativeness, as a Form of Witness That the Gospel Itself Motivates: The instructions of verses 1–2 describe a civic posture that is as countercultural in the contemporary West as it was in first-century Crete. The public discourse of contemporary democracies is increasingly characterized by the very vices that Paul prohibits here — speaking evil of opponents, quarreling, contempt, the aggressive assertion of rights at the expense of courtesy. The community of faith that practices what Paul describes here — submissive to governing authorities, ready for every good work, slandering no one, not quarreling, gentle, showing perfect courtesy to all — will be as visibly different in its civic engagement as the Cretan church was meant to be in its own context.

2. Use the Memory of Your Own Pre-Conversion Condition as the Permanent Medicine Against Contempt for Those Outside the Faith: The for we ourselves were once is not a historical curiosity but a pastoral prescription. Every believer has some version of the list in verse 3 that applies to their own pre-conversion or pre-formation experience. The regular, honest rehearsal of that list — the acknowledgment of one’s own former foolishness, disobedience, slavery to passions, malice, hatred — is the most effective available antidote to the condescension and contempt that can so easily develop in communities that have been inside the faith for a long time. The church that remembers verse 3 about itself will find it impossible to engage the world outside with anything other than the compassion that the memory of shared humanity and shared fallenness produces.

How This Relates to Today

The civic instructions of verses 1–2 have direct application to the contemporary church’s engagement with political life, social controversy, and cultural conflict. The temptation of Christian communities in periods of cultural conflict is to adopt the combative posture of the surrounding culture — to speak evil of those on the other side of political disputes, to engage in the brawling that social media enables and rewards, to reserve courtesy for allies and contempt for opponents. Titus 3:1–2 describes a different posture: the submissive, obedient, gentle, courteous engagement that is rooted not in political strategy but in the gospel that has transformed the community from the condition of verse 3.

The self-description of verse 3 is also one of the most important available resources for Christians engaging in apologetics and evangelism. The awareness that we ourselves were once in the condition of those we are trying to reach — not inherently superior, not born into the community of faith, but recipients of the mercy that verse 4 describes — shapes the entire manner of the engagement. Evangelism that has forgotten verse 3 tends to become condescending. Evangelism that has remembered it tends to become the kind of compassionate, humble testimony that reflects the mercy it is trying to commend.

Key Lesson: **The civic instructions of verses 1–3 establish that the community of faith should engage the broader society with submissiveness, readiness for good works, gentleness, and courtesy toward all people, grounded not in strategic calculation but in the humbling memory that we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, enslaved, malicious, and full of hatred — the first-person plural that makes contempt for those outside the community of faith impossible for anyone who has honestly received it.**

Titus 3:4–7

The Washing of Regeneration: The Most Compressed Trinitarian Soteriology in the Pastoral Epistles

*(4) But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour
toward man appeared,
(5) 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;
(6) Which he shed on us abundantly
through Jesus Christ our Saviour;
(7) That being justified by his grace,
we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

The Context

Verses 4–7 are the theological center of the chapter and, arguably, of the entire letter. The but when of verse 4 — turning from the description of the pre-conversion condition in verse 3 to the divine intervention that changed it — is one of the most dramatic pivots in the Pauline corpus, comparable to the but God of Ephesians 2:4. The goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared: not a principle or a theological concept, but a historical appearing (epephanē), the same word used in chapter

2:11 for the appearing of grace and in chapter 2:13 for the anticipated appearing of glory. The salvation Paul describes is historically anchored.

Verse 5 is the Pauline *sola gratia* in its most economical form: not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy. Every element of the salvation is on the divine side of the ledger. The saving is God's. The mercy is God's. The means is specified as the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit — the two phrases capturing the double dimension of the new birth: the cleansing that removes what was there before (washing of regeneration) and the positive renewal that creates what was not there before (renewing of the Holy Spirit). Whether the washing of regeneration refers specifically to baptism or more broadly to the new birth has been debated throughout church history, but the regenerative significance of the event — not merely the external rite — is the clear point.

Verse 6 adds the abundance of the Spirit's outpouring: whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior. The richly is the same abundance as the richly of Ephesians 1:7 (the redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace). The Spirit is not given sparingly. And the Trinitarian structure of verses 4–7 is complete: the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior (the Father's initiative) has appeared; the Holy Spirit is poured out (the Spirit's work); through Jesus Christ our Savior (the Son's mediating role). The salvation that the passage describes is Trinitarian from the initiative to the means to the application.

Verse 7 gives the outcome of the saving: that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The justification is by grace — the same *sola gratia* of verse 5 restated. And the result of justification is heirship: the justified are not merely forgiven sinners but heirs, with all that inheritance implies about relationship, status, and future expectation. The hope of eternal life — the same phrase used in chapter 1:2, where the eternal life was promised by God who cannot lie before the ages began — closes the circle: the pre-temporal promise of chapter 1 has been historically realized in the appearing of chapter 3, and the community that receives it now lives as heirs of what has been promised.

Plain American English

But then the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared. He saved us — not because of any righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying.

Key Observations

“But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared”: This signifies **The But When Is the Most Dramatic Theological Pivot in the Chapter — the Divine Goodness and Philanthropia Breaking into the Human Condition Described in Verse 3 from a Direction That the Human Condition Could Neither Anticipate Nor Produce.**

The but when (*hote de*) is the structural pivot that makes verse 3 not merely a description of former sin but the dark backdrop against which the divine initiative becomes visible. The goodness (*chrestotes* —

moral excellence and generosity) and loving kindness (philanthropia — literally love of humanity) of God our Savior are the specific divine attributes that motivated the appearing. The philanthropia is remarkable: God's love for humanity is the term used, not a more restricted love for the elect or the righteous. The appearing of these attributes in Christ is the historical event that changed everything described in verse 3. Nothing in verse 3's description of the human condition could have generated or earned this appearing; it came from the character of the God who is the source of it.

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us”: This signifies **The Most Economical Statement of Sola Gratia in the Letter — the Salvation Is Entirely on the Divine Side, with the Human Contribution Explicitly Excluded in a Way That Denies Even the Most Minimal Works-Righteousness Basis.**

The not because of works done by us in righteousness is the most direct available exclusion of any human contribution to the basis of salvation in the letter. Not works of righteousness done by us in general — not even righteous works, which might seem like a plausible basis. The exclusion is as absolute as it is possible to state. And the corresponding positive — but according to his own mercy — locates the entire salvific initiative in the divine attribute rather than in any human qualification. This is the soteriology of Ephesians 2:8–9 (by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works) stated in its most compressed form. The pastoral implication for the community is as significant as the soteriological one: the people who have been saved entirely by mercy, not by works, have the strongest possible reason to practice the humility that their pre-conversion condition (verse 3) and their post-conversion status (saved, justified, heirs) both require.

“By the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour”: This signifies **The Trinitarian Structure of the Salvation Is Complete — the Father's Initiative, the Spirit's Regenerating and Renewing Work, and the Son's Mediating Role Are All Present in the Most Compressed Trinitarian Soteriology in the Pastoral Epistles.**

The washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit describes the experiential reality of the new birth from two angles: the negative cleansing (washing away what was there before) and the positive renewal (creating what was not there before). The Holy Spirit is the agent of both. And the richly poured out through Jesus Christ our Savior specifies the mediation: the Spirit's lavish outpouring is through the Son, making the salvific event explicitly Trinitarian in its structure. The Father's goodness and loving kindness initiate and motivate; the Spirit regenerates and renews; the Son mediates the Spirit's application. This is as complete a Trinitarian account of the salvation as can be found in any three verses in Paul's letters, and its placement in a pastoral letter addressing civic behavior and false teachers demonstrates that Trinitarian theology in Paul is not academic but pastorally foundational.

“That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life”: This signifies **The Outcome of the Justification Is Not Merely Forgiveness but Heirship — a Status That Implies Relationship, Future Expectation, and the Full Inheritance That Connects Back to the Pre-Temporal Promise of Chapter 1.**

The heirs according to the hope of eternal life is the final statement of the justified community's status, and it is deliberately richer than the mere forgiveness of sins. Heirs have a relationship to the one from whom they inherit. Heirs have a claim on a future possession that is not yet fully in hand but is certain by virtue of the relationship. And the hope of eternal life connects the status of heirs back to chapter 1:2, where the eternal life was promised by God who cannot lie before the ages began. The community that has been saved, regenerated, renewed, and justified is the community of heirs whose present life is shaped

by the certainty of what they stand to inherit — the same eschatological orientation that calibrated the present-age ethics of chapter 2.

What This Means for Us Today

1. Receive the Trinitarian Soteriology of Verses 4–7 as the Fullest Available Account of What Happened in the Salvation That Is the Foundation of Everything Else in the Letter: The compressed Trinitarian structure of these verses — the Father’s goodness and loving kindness motivating the appearing, the Spirit’s washing and renewing as the means, the Son as the mediator through whom the Spirit is poured out richly — is the foundation beneath every behavioral instruction in the letter. The community that is commanded to be gentle toward outsiders (verses 1–2), devoted to good works (verse 8), and ready for every good work (verse 1) is not being asked to perform these things as the basis of its standing but as the response of those who have been justified by grace and made heirs of eternal life. Keep the soteriological foundation clearly in view under every practical instruction.

2. Resist Both Complacency and Pride on the Basis of the Salvation That Is Entirely Unmerited: The not because of works done by us in righteousness produces a double pastoral effect when it is properly received. It eliminates pride in the salvation, because nothing the community contributed to the basis of it gives it grounds for self-congratulation. And it eliminates complacency, because the mercy that saved the community from the condition of verse 3 is the mercy that also trains in the godly life (chapter 2:12) and produces the heirs who devote themselves to good works (verse 8). The same grace that humbles the pride of the self-made religious person also activates the gratitude that produces the good works that are the proper response of those who have been justified by grace.

3. Appreciate the Richness of the Spirit’s Outpouring as the Ground for the Ongoing Transformation That the Behavioral Instructions of the Letter Require: The whom he poured out on us richly is not merely a statement about the abundance of the Spirit’s initial gift but about the ongoing resource available to the community that is being asked to live in the countercultural way the letter describes. The gentle, courteous, good-works-devoted community of Titus is not being asked to produce these qualities from its own moral reserves. It is the community on whom the Spirit has been poured out richly, the community that has been regenerated and renewed — and that ongoing renewal is the resource for the ongoing formation that the behavioral instructions require.

How This Relates to Today

The but when of verse 4 has a specific formal function in Paul’s argument that speaks with direct relevance to any contemporary account of the gospel. The human condition of verse 3 — the full description of pre-conversion foolishness, disobedience, slavery, malice, and hatred — is the condition that the gospel addresses. The but when establishes that the initiative for changing that condition came from outside the condition itself. Contemporary accounts of the gospel that soften either the darkness of the condition (making the gospel unnecessary) or the gratuity of the divine initiative (making it contingent on human worthiness) have weakened the very pivot that gives the passage its power. The but when is as dramatic as it is precisely because of what precedes it.

The washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit has also been a site of theological controversy (about baptism and regeneration) that has sometimes distracted from the pastoral point the passage is making. Whatever one’s view of the relationship between the sacrament and the regeneration,

the passage is insisting that the new birth is real, that it is the Spirit's work, that it is richly given, and that it produces people who are justified heirs of eternal life. These affirmations are the common ground of the Trinitarian Christian tradition, and they are the foundation beneath the practical instructions that the letter's final verses will lay out.

Key Lesson: **The great theological pivot of verses 4–7 — from the human condition of verse 3 to the divine goodness and loving kindness that appeared, saving through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit poured out richly through Jesus Christ — is the most compressed Trinitarian soteriology in the Pastoral Epistles, establishing that the justified heirs of eternal life owe their status entirely to mercy rather than to works, and that the entire foundation of the letter's behavioral instructions rests on what God has done rather than on what the community has achieved or deserves.**

Titus 3:8–15

Devoted to Good Works, Avoiding Foolish Controversies, and the Final Pastoral Instructions

(8) *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.*
(9) *But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies,
and contentions, and strivings about the law;
for they are unprofitable and vain.*
(10) *A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;*
(11) *Knowing that he that is such is subverted,
and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*
(12) *When I shall send Artemas unto thee,
or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis:
for I have determined there to winter.*
(13) *Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently,
that nothing be wanting unto them.*
(14) *And let ours also learn to maintain good works
for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.*
(15) *All that are with me salute thee.
Salute them that love us in the faith.
Grace be with you all. Amen.*

The Context

The faithful saying of verse 8 likely refers to the entire soteriological statement of verses 4–7 — this is a trustworthy statement, and Paul wants Titus to insist on it. But the insisting is immediately given its practical purpose: so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good

works. This is one of the clearest available connections in the letter between sound theology and good works: the trustworthy saying (the gospel) is to be constantly affirmed so that the people who believe it will devote themselves to good works. The theology produces the practice; the faithful word produces the fruitful life. And the immediate qualification — these things are excellent and profitable for people — distinguishes the profitable good works from the unprofitable controversies that verse 9 will name.

Verse 9 is the sharpest and most direct dismissal of profitless religious controversy in Paul's letters: but avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. The contrast is precise: good works are excellent and profitable (verse 8); controversies about the law are unprofitable and worthless (verse 9). Paul's criterion for distinguishing between what should be insisted upon and what should be avoided is explicitly utilitarian in the sense of asking what actually produces fruit in the lives of the people the ministry is serving. The false teachers of chapter 1 who were subverting whole households for shameful gain were engaged in exactly the kind of controversy Paul is dismissing here.

The instruction about the divisive person in verses 10–11 is the most specific piece of pastoral policy in the letter's final section. After a first warning and a second warning, the person who stirs up division is to be avoided. The rationale is diagnostically interesting: knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned. The person who persists in division after two warnings has revealed, by the persistence itself, that the problem is not the absence of the right argument but the condition of the will. Self-condemned implies that the person knows what they are doing is wrong but continues anyway — making continued engagement a waste of the community's finite pastoral resources.

The closing instructions of verses 12–15 are the most personal section of the letter, with specific references to Artemas, Tychicus, Nicopolis, Zenas, and Apollos. The practical details — do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, send Zenas and Apollos on their way, make sure they lack nothing — are the ordinary logistics of apostolic ministry and form a vivid contrast to the theological density of what precedes them. The final exhortation of verse 14 — and let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful — closes the letter on the same note it has been returning to throughout chapter 3 (and the entire letter): good works. The grace that appeared, the mercy that saved, the Spirit who was poured out richly, the justification that made heirs — all of it exists, in part, so that the people of God might not be unfruitful.

Plain American English

This is a trustworthy saying, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God will be careful to devote themselves to doing good. These things are good and helpful for everyone. But steer clear of foolish debates, genealogies, arguments, and fights about the law — these things are useless and worthless. Warn a divisive person once, and then again. After that, have nothing to do with them. You can be sure that such people are twisted and sinful — they're self-condemned. As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to spend the winter there. Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and make sure they have everything they need. And I want our people to learn to engage in doing good in order to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful. Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.

Key Observations

“That they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men”: This signifies **The Purpose of Insisting on the Faithful Saying Is Explicitly the Production of Good Works — Sound Theology Exists in the Letter’s Framework Not as an End in Itself but as the Generator of the Fruitful Life It Produces.**

The so that those who have believed may be careful to devote themselves to good works establishes the relationship between the theological insisting of verse 8a and the practical fruitfulness of verse 8b. The faithful saying — the gospel summarized in verses 4–7 — is to be constantly affirmed not as an exercise in doctrinal maintenance for its own sake, but because its constant affirmation is what produces the community devoted to good works. Theology in Titus is never an end in itself; it is always in service of the formation of a people who are fruitful, zealous for good works, adorning the doctrine of God their Savior. The insisting on the theology and the insisting on the good works are not two different concerns; they are one concern expressed at two levels.

“But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain”: This signifies **The Criterion for Distinguishing What to Insist On from What to Avoid Is Explicitly Productive vs. Unproductive — Sound Doctrine Produces Good Works, Foolish Controversies Produce Nothing Profitable.**

The contrast between verse 8 (excellent and profitable) and verse 9 (unprofitable and worthless) is the sharpest available statement of Paul’s criterion for distinguishing fruitful from unfruitful ministry content. The foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law are not dismissed because they are theologically wrong (though they may be) but because they are fruitless: they produce no good works, build up no community, help no one in cases of urgent need, and leave the community unfruitful in exactly the way verse 14 most wants to avoid. This is a demanding standard for evaluating the content of preaching, teaching, and theological discussion: does this produce the devoted, fruitful community that sound doctrine is supposed to generate? If not, it may qualify as a foolish controversy regardless of how interesting it is to debate.

“A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself”: This signifies **The Two-Warning Policy Before Rejection Is the Most Specific Piece of Pastoral Policy in the Letter’s Final Section — and the Rationale Is Diagnostic Rather Than Punitive: Persistence After Warning Reveals a Condition of the Will Rather Than an Absence of Information.**

The instruction to warn a divisive person twice before avoiding them is the most concise available model of graduated pastoral response to persistent error. The first warning gives the benefit of the doubt — perhaps the person does not see the harm of what they are doing. The second warning removes that excuse. And the avoidance after two warnings is not punitive exclusion but the recognition that continued engagement with someone who has heard the correction twice and persists is a waste of finite pastoral resources better directed toward the fruitful. The self-condemned rationale is diagnostic: the persistence after two warnings reveals that the problem is not the absence of the right argument but a warped will that knows it is wrong and continues anyway. Additional arguments cannot address a problem that is fundamentally not an argument problem.

“Let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful”: This signifies **The Letter’s Final Exhortation Returns One Last Time to the Theme That Has Sounded**

Throughout All Three Chapters — the Good Works That Are the Fruit of the Grace That Has Appeared, the Purpose of the Redemption, and the Practical Shape of the Gospel.

The and let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful is not a mere addendum but the letter's final thematic statement. Good works have been the practical destination of the letter from the beginning: the elder who holds firm to sound doctrine so he can teach and refute (chapter 1), the older women who teach good (chapter 2), the community adorning the doctrine of God our Savior in every station (chapter 2), those who have believed careful to devote themselves to good works (chapter 3), and now the final exhortation to devote themselves to meeting urgent practical needs. The good works that close the letter are not merely ethical performance but the practical fruitfulness of the community that has received the grace that has appeared, been washed and renewed by the Spirit, justified and made heirs — and is now living out the purpose for which Christ gave himself.

What This Means for Us Today

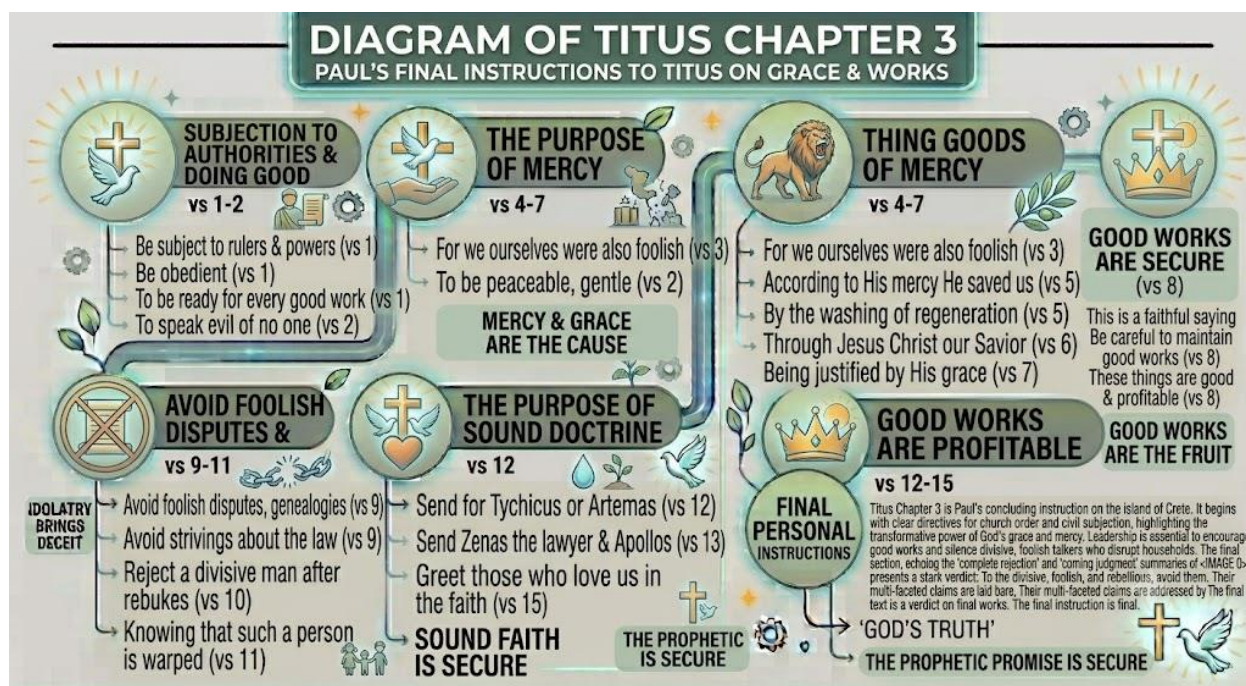
- 1. Evaluate the Content of Preaching and Teaching by the Productive Standard Paul Applies — Does This Generate the Devoted, Fruitful Community That Sound Doctrine Is Supposed to Produce:** The excellent and profitable versus unprofitable and worthless contrast of verses 8–9 is one of the most demanding and most practically useful evaluative tools available to contemporary ministers and churches. The question it poses is not merely is this theologically accurate? but does this produce the good works and fruitfulness that the gospel is supposed to generate? Theologically accurate teaching that generates endless controversy, division, and fruitlessness rather than devoted, good-works-producing community may qualify as what Paul is dismissing in verse 9, even if the content is not technically false. The standard is productive — does it build up the community of faith and serve the people of God?
- 2. Practice the Two-Warning Policy for Divisive Persons Rather Than Either Premature Exclusion or Indefinite Tolerance:** The graduated pastoral response of verses 10–11 is one of the most specific and most practically actionable pieces of pastoral policy in the letter. Two warnings before avoidance. Not immediate exclusion (which might be punitive and insufficiently patient), and not indefinite tolerance (which wastes pastoral resources on someone who has demonstrated by their persistence that additional argument will not help). Implementing this in contemporary church contexts requires the courage to give actual warnings — not merely hints or suggestions — and the discernment to recognize when persistence after two warnings has revealed a condition of the will that makes additional engagement unfruitful.
- 3. Connect Good Works to Urgent Practical Needs, Treating the Material Care of People in Genuine Need as One of the Primary Forms That Gospel Fruitfulness Takes:** The let our people devote themselves to good works so as to help cases of urgent need is one of the most practically specific statements of what good works means in the letter. It is not primarily a vague exhortation to virtue but the direction of the community's energy toward people who have actual urgent practical needs. This connects the theological richness of verses 4–7 to the most ordinary and concrete forms of practical compassion: meeting urgent need. The community that has been saved by the philanthropia (love of humanity) of God (verse 4) is the community most called to practice the human love of neighbor that meets people in their practical need.

How This Relates to Today

The unprofitable and worthless versus excellent and profitable distinction of verses 8–9 speaks directly into the contemporary church’s tendency to invest enormous energy in theological controversies that produce heat rather than light and division rather than formation. Paul does not say that the issues involved in foolish controversies are unimportant in the abstract — he says they are unprofitable in the specific context of ministry. The question of whether a given theological debate or controversy is profitable or worthless is always a contextual and pastoral question, not merely a doctrinal one. Some controversies that are worth engaging in academic theology are not worth the pastoral capital required to engage them in every congregational context.

The closing instruction about Zenas and Apollos — send them on their way and make sure they lack nothing — is also a model of the practical, logistical support for ministry workers that is itself a form of good works. The letter that has been concerned throughout with sound doctrine and good works closes with the specific practical acts of provision for traveling missionaries that express the same community care that the theological content of the letter has been requiring. The high theology of verses 4–7 and the logistical practicality of verses 12–14 are not in tension; they are the same love of God and love of neighbor expressed at different levels of abstraction.

Key Lesson: **The closing section of the letter establishes that sound doctrine generates good works as its practical fruit, that the criterion for distinguishing what to insist on from what to avoid is whether it is excellent and profitable versus unprofitable and worthless for the community’s formation, that divisive persons are to receive two warnings before avoidance and the pastoral reason is diagnostic rather than punitive, and that the final charge — let our people devote themselves to good works to help cases of urgent need — is the practical destination of the entire letter’s theology, the fruitfulness that the grace that appeared was always working to produce.**



Closing Prayer for Titus Chapter 3 and the Whole Letter

Heavenly Father,

We close Titus chapter 3 — and with it the entire letter — having traveled from the theological foundation of chapter 1 through the community formation of chapter 2 to the soteriological summit of chapter 3's great but when passage and the practical destination of chapter 3's closing call to good works. We have received the qualification standards for elders who hold firm to the trustworthy word. We have received the household instructions for older men and women and younger women and men and workers, all charged with adorning the doctrine of God our Savior. We have received the grace that appeared, training us in renouncing ungodliness and living self-controlled, upright, and godly in the present age, waiting for the blessed hope of the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Lord, let the but when of chapter 3 be the organizing pivot of our theological imagination as it was Paul's. We were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved, malicious, and full of hatred — but when the kindness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, not because of works we had done in righteousness but according to Your mercy, You saved us through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit poured out richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that justified by Your grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Receive our gratitude for this. Let the gratitude be visible in the good works that this salvation exists, in part, to produce.

Make us the people this letter describes: sound in doctrine and sound in life, with households in order, communities that adorn the gospel they profess, civic engagements shaped by the gentleness that remembers where we ourselves came from, and practical compassion that meets urgent needs rather than generating profitable controversies. Let us not be unfruitful. Let the grace that appeared produce in us the fruitfulness it was working to generate — the purified people, zealous for good works, for whom Christ gave himself.

Grace be with us all. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria
Glory to God Alone

Conclusion

The Unfinished Task

We began this journey on the rugged shores of Crete, looking over the shoulder of a young, battle-tested pastor facing an seemingly impossible assignment. Forty-six verses later, we find ourselves standing on the frontlines of our own contemporary cultural landscape. The names and the faces have changed, but the spiritual battle lines remain exactly the same.

The island of Crete was not won over by a flash of sudden cultural relevance or a compromise of foundational truths. It was transformed because a young shepherd stayed his post, set things in order, and refused to dilute the "faithful word" (Titus 1:9).

Through this verse-by-verse study of Titus, we have seen that a healthy church is built on three unshakeable pillars:

- **Godly Leadership:** Men of uncompromised character who lead by example and hold fast to sound doctrine.
- **Ordered Living:** A congregation where truth is lived out across generations—where older men and women mentor the younger, creating a culture of mutual respect and spiritual maturity.
- **Gospel-Driven Witness:** A people fiercely committed to good works, not to earn their salvation, but to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in a dark and watching world.

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." — **Titus 2:11-12**

A Charge to the Under-Shepherds

To the pastors, elders, and leaders who have turned these pages: the mandate now falls to you. The pressures to compromise, to take shortcuts, and to look to the world for our blueprints will only intensify. But our calling remains standard. We are called to be faithful stewards, not successful entrepreneurs.

We must protect the flock from the creeping wolves of false teaching, protect our own character from the erosion of compromise, and relentlessly point our people to the transforming power of God's grace.

As you close this manual and step back into the everyday realities of your ministry, remember that you do not labor in vain. The same grace that redeemed you is the grace that sustains you. Keep preaching the Word. Keep training the next generation. Keep setting things in order.

The Chief Shepherd is coming back. Until that day, let us stand firm, guard the trust committed to us, and prove ourselves faithful under-shepherds of the flock of God.

Solomon's porch may fade, and empires will crumble, but the Word of our God stands forever.

A Note from the Author

If you have made it to the end of this volume, it is my sincere hope that you did not read it merely as a spectator of theology, but as a participant in the ministry of the gospel.

Writing a verse-by-verse commentary is a deeply humbling task. When you slow down enough to examine every word, every tense, and every connective phrase of holy Scripture, you quickly realize that you are not mastering the text—the text is mastering you. My time spent navigating the sharp, urgent instructions Paul gave to Titus has left a permanent mark on my own heart and my view of the local church.

I want to extend a personal word of gratitude to you for investing your time in *The Shepherd's Manual*. Whether you are preparing a sermon series, leading a small group, or simply studying to show yourself approved, sharing this journey through Titus with you has been a profound privilege.

I also want to express my deepest thanks to the pastors, mentors, and fellow laborers who have sharpened my understanding of pastoral ministry over the years. To the academic colleagues who challenged my exegesis, and to the congregations who have patiently listened to me unpack these truths from the pulpit—thank you. Your feedback, prayers, and shared commitment to the Word are woven into every chapter of this book.

Most importantly, I am grateful to my family, whose unwavering support, patience, and encouragement made the long hours of writing and research possible.

As this book leaves my desk and finds a place on yours, my ultimate prayer is that it ceases to be a commentary by Paul Crawford and becomes a catalyst for your own devotion to Christ. May the Lord grant you the courage to stand firm in sound doctrine, the grace to live a life that adorns the gospel, and the joy of seeing His church set in order.

Until the Chief Shepherd appears, keep holding fast to the faithful Word.

In His Abundant Grace,

Dr. Paul Crawford

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