

Dr. Robert Yarbrough, Pastoral Epistles, Session 14, Titus 3

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This is Dr. Robert Yarbrough in his teaching on the Pastoral Epistles, Apostolic Instruction for Pastoral Leaders and Their Followers. Session 14, Titus 3.

We come to our final lecture in the book of Titus as we are studying the Pastoral Epistles, which are apostolic instructions for pastoral leaders and also for their followers. Probably just as important for followers to study the Pastoral Epistles as it is for pastors to study the Pastoral Epistles.

And as we look at Titus 3, we see that there's a heading, saved in order to do good, and we're reminded that in the NIV, which is where we're getting our headings, we see headings going back into chapter 1, appointing elders who love what is good. The next heading, rebuking those who fail to do good. Next heading, doing good for the sake of the gospel, and now saved in order to do good.

And we've seen already that there's this stress on good works in Titus, which the NIV translates to doing what is good. And we also see, and we saw right at the end of the previous chapter, this enormous theological stress, the stress on the grace of God and the stress on the work of Christ. So don't let the headings lull you into thinking that Titus is mainly some moralistic book or some list of rules or some code that some writer in antiquity got into the church and tried to tell people how to live their lives.

It's actually a very theological, theologically grounded set of admonitions that addresses a real-life situation. Probably in every congregation in the world, if you go out over a 5, 10, 15-year span, probably every congregation is going to deal with the issue of forces arising, people arising in the church, next to the church, relative to the church, pastors influencing the church. Somebody's going to come up with ideas that are not really healthy for the practice and the doctrine of the church, and you're going to have people who profess to know God, but by their deeds, they're denying him.

Or just sin creeps into the church. This is the kind of thing that Titus is addressing for the sake of the church expanding locally in a healthy way, but also so that as it expands and new congregations are formed, it will have the leadership team that it needs. Chapter 1 gives qualifications for the leaders.

Chapter 2 gives directions for the godliness of the people and the nurture of individual demographic groups that are in the church, all on the basis of a very rich and beautiful theological foundation, which we will see reiterated in a few verses as

we get into Chapter 3. So, Chapter 3, remind the people, call this to mind. And that's in red because it's an imperative. It's a command.

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be disobedient, to be ready to do whatever is good. And the Greek there is zealous, ready for every good work. And then he gives examples.

To slander no one, it's a good thing to hold your tongue when you don't have anything good to say or true to say. It's a good thing to be peaceable, it's a good thing to be considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone. Now, there's another translation that I think that I would prefer here, which is to have every consideration for all people.

And what I think he's saying here is to cut other people slack. To always be gentle toward everyone, it's just not necessitated by the words. And, I mean, it's not a wrong translation, but it's a rendering which I don't think is, I think it's misleading.

I think it suggests that nobody should have a strong or an overbearing personality. Some people are just people that you don't think of them as gentle. And you don't have to be gentle to be a Christian.

You can be yourself and be a Christian. But there is a brash and arrogant and overbearing manner that is not appropriate just to being human. So be a decent human, and don't be brash, arrogant, and overbearing.

And as far as your regard for other people, that's what Paul's trying to avoid, the syndrome which I think we see in all societies, where we get people who are dismissive of others. It may come across as racism, or it may come across as class superiority, or it may come across as educational differences. You may be, have little education, so you sneer at the elite, or you may be very, very smart, and you're building a better planet, and you hate all these people that, don't want to live with the environmental consciences and so forth that you have.

That's what he's saying. Don't be the kind of person who writes other people off, because they're not like you. And here's the reason why.

He says, we were no better. At one time, in verse three, we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. That's the human condition.

There are no exceptions to that. That's what everybody is. It just takes different forms.

We lived in malice and envy, being hated, and hating one another. Now, Paul could especially say this, because as a minority population in the Roman Empire, I mean, not only is this true at the, at the more individual level, I'm going to guess that on the day when Saul of Tarsus heard Stephen's testimony, and it says that, they ground their teeth at him, and they stoned him to death, I'm going to guess that Saul of Tarsus felt some hatred there, and that was directed, toward a countryman, and maybe somebody that he knew personally. So that's one level.

But the Jews were a despised minority in the Roman Empire. And if you read the writings of somebody named Josephus, he writes at times about the contempt that the Roman army had for Jews, and how they insulted the Jews and made fun of them, and, desecrated their holy things, and made sport of their God, and they were idolatrous, they were polytheists, and, there was bad blood between Jews and Gentiles, Jews, and Romans. It's exactly what we see in Israel today with the Israelis and the Palestinians, deep, deep antipathy.

And Paul says all of us grew up in a world where this is a normal part of life. It's not a good part of life, but you can't go anywhere in the world, and meet very many people there, where you won't find out what these, who these people hate. Because going back in time, people have offended each other, and they carry these prejudices.

Verse 4, but, go in the other direction, when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, and I've got the Greek there, not because of works done in righteousness. Not because of righteousness, not because of works, that is, works in righteousness. So, the translation is, not because of righteous things we had done, that's not a bad translation, but it's not because of works done in righteousness, but because of his mercy.

I just wanted for you to see the word works in there, because things don't make it as clear that he's using this word works, which is a loaded word in Titus. He saved us through the washing of rebirth, and renewal by the Holy Spirit. Remember Jesus said, you must be born again, and that's a metaphor for spiritual transformation by the word of God, born again.

And this is a metaphor that makes us think of baptism, but baptism is just a sign, and a symbol, and a seal of the spiritual work of God through which people are reborn, or through which they're cleansed, the washing of rebirth, and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously, we'll come back to that, through Jesus Christ our Savior. So that, having been justified by his grace, there's that word grace again, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. Whenever Paul, the Jew, when he uses the word heir, he's thinking back to that Abrahamic heritage, I think he's even thinking back to the promise that God made to Adam and Eve in

Genesis 3:15, that the serpent's head would be crushed, and by the seed of the woman there would be a redeemed people of God, and a redeemed creation.

This is a wonderful heritage, and the Holy Spirit poured this out through Christ so that, having been justified by his grace, we, we Jews, we Gentiles, we Cretans, we Romans, we everybody, the oneness of the body of Christ, so that we might become heirs of God's work and God's promise, having the assurance of eternal life, having the hope of eternal life. And I'll just want to comment, eternal life, we naturally think of heaven, but Christ has already risen, the age to come is already present, so always remember eternal life is a quality of life now. It's going to be manifested temporally in its extent is unending, so it's eternal in that, in that sense in the future.

But it is already present, and it already denotes a quality of the life that we already live. And I say this because this is part of the heritage, and especially if you go back to Deuteronomy, and you study the use of life in Deuteronomy, there are many, many blessings to Israel, and he says, do these things and you will live. And there are many promises, and the attraction is to live, and they were already living, and the Canaanites were living, and everybody was living who was alive.

But I think he's calling them to a dimension of life in covenant with him, a dimension of life which Moses characterized as having your hearts circumcised, a dimension of life in which they did love the Lord their God, which unfortunately often they did not do. They had the command, but they did not change their hearts, so to speak. They hardened their hearts.

The very generation that Moses spoke to so much, all died in the wilderness. They had all these promises and all these assurances, but they didn't live. They died.

They didn't have eternal life, because they didn't allow God into their hearts. Moses did, Joshua did, Caleb did, and some did, but as a whole, they resisted the word of God, and so they did not become heirs having the hope of this quality of life, this God quality of God being with his people as he promised to be then and as he promises to be now and into the future. Now, everything I've just said, Paul summarizes, verse 8, this is a trustworthy saying.

Now, going forward from here, I want you to stress these things, Titus, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. So, you see this very, very direct move from this glorious theological vision, which really encompasses practically the whole of the Bible, of the washing of rebirth, and renewal, and the pouring out, and justification by grace, heirs, the hope of eternal life.

Stress these things so that those who have trusted God will translate them over directly to doing good works. I mean, it's not all this, flowery, lofty theological vision,

and then, several days later, I need to do something. It's like, it's this mainstream, direct thing that it's transformative of our behavior, and it's also, it's quite natural.

It's quite natural. Sometimes in child rearing, things go up and down in child rearing, but there are times when things are really going well, and, there's good synergy, and there's good chemistry, and kids can move from the relationship with their parents, and they can move into actions which are expressive of that relationship. They recognize their love for their parents, and they see that their parents have provided for them, and their parents love them, and maybe it's a busy household, and there's a lot to do that day, and, sometimes kids can drag their feet.

They don't want to do anything, but sometimes kids can really, like, even get ahead of you and surprise you with how sophisticated their sense of the need of the hour is, and their willingness to work to do what they need to do for that need to be addressed. It just grows out of the relationship, and that's what Paul, that's how he lives. He lives in a relationship with God in which he's learned the delight of living a life of a servant of God, and an emissary of Jesus Christ, and that's what he wants the gospel to communicate through Titus to the older men, and the older women, and the younger women, and the younger men.

He wants people to have this direct line from the cross of Christ, and the resurrection of Christ, and the new birth, and the new life in Christ, to how they live their lives in very particular ways. Now, once you get used to this, then you don't have to have somebody telling you all the time what a good work is, because it becomes habitual, and, your life is full of acts of service, but Crete was evidently, as Paul writes Titus, he's addressing, a new Christian situation, and remember, in any case, we don't have like a Christian heritage. The church is a new thing, and remember, and I haven't said this in any of these lectures, it's very important for us to remember, that you have this Greco-Roman world with very ancient heritage, more ancient than they knew.

I mean, they all knew, we don't know, but so many centuries back, but, they did things a certain way, and in the cultural air was, it was thick with religion. The Roman emperor was also the high priest of the Roman civil religion, and so religion, and worship, and temples, and gods, and goddesses, everybody, affirmed these kinds of things, but in none of these religions was ethics associated with religion. I mean, that connection wasn't made, largely because none of these religions involved scriptures that had guidance.

They had philosophers who thought about how you should live, and there were schools of thought as to why we're here, and should we live for pleasure, should we just affirm sort of like some force behind everything, should we live in a celebratory way, should we live, mainly trying to placate these gods for better crops, there were all kinds of inferences you could draw, but there was no guidance from the gods, and being religious wasn't associated with being moral. Those connections weren't made,

and that's one reason historians tell us why so many people were attracted to Judaism, especially women. Women were attracted to Judaism because, in the synagogue, women were dignified.

Even though women had to sit separately from men, the scriptures that were read hallowed marriage, and women weren't regarded in the Bible as just instruments for use by men. Male and female created he them. They were part of God's good intention in creation, and then there was a morality that was protective of women.

Men were supposed to not commit adultery, and sin, sex sin is a sin by both parties, but often women then and now are victims of male predation, and there was protection in the Jewish community for women sexually. That was part of the religion, and so you have the Ten Commandments and dozens of other commands that set forth a morality, that was supposed to be reflective of God's character. Because of who God is, this is how you live in communion with, in covenant with this God.

You do these things, you don't do these things, and that was needed in Abraham's world and in Moses' world. It was a world of corruption, and a world of sinfulness, and a world of exploitation, and a world of slavery, a world of rape, a world of kidnapping, a world of victimization of those who have and those who don't have. It was the Wild West on steroids, and the Torah and the Old Testament and the people of God, that was a refuge for people in an anarchic world.

Well, you get to the Greco-Roman world, and Greco-Roman gods and goddesses and religions did not offer moral guidance. There was a sense of morality because people are made in God's image, and by common grace, people tend to know, it's not a great thing to murder people, and they had laws against many things that we would agree from the Bible. It wasn't good to steal in the Roman Empire, but they didn't associate that with religion.

But here we have on Crete, which is very Greco-Roman and had the reputation for, Cretans had the reputation for being liars, and, don't turn your back on a Cretan. This is a religion that calls for a change in your behavior, and for a lot of people, this would be like a revolution. You mean everything I do now is supposed to be conditioned by God and the Word of God and the presence of Christ, and this change of heart that I've had, it needs to be expressed in all of my relations, all my business dealings, my dealings with my spouse, my dealings with my kids, my personal life.

I mean, that's like a multi-year project even to begin to start to implement comprehensively. And actually, a lot of us know exactly what this looks like because we grew up in very pagan ways, whether we went to church or not. It's easy not to be very deeply conditioned by the totality of the teaching of the Word of God, and by

a relationship with God which more and more draws you into spiritually productive life.

It's very easy, to have even a legitimate Christian experience and be saved, and for it not to be very comprehensive, and not to go very deep, and not to move you very powerfully in quantitative ways. I came to faith when I was age nine, and it saved me from a lot of destruction when I was a teen, but it really didn't move me tectonically until I was 20 years old. It was more of a dormant thing, and that happens to a lot of people, that they make a step in the direction of the gospel, and they may even receive it, but it lies dormant for some time, and then they find out gradually, wow, I've got lots of areas in my life that really are not subject to Christ's Lordship, and then you think you're making progress, then all of a sudden, like whole new vistas open up, and as is in my case, sometimes you even find I need to undergo a change of life.

I was headed in a logging direction, I was heading in a hunting direction, I was heading in a hiking and northern rocky recreational life direction, and my calling said you've got to go in a different direction. It took a lot of good works. Selling my house, that's a good thing, because I had to do it out of obedience to God.

I had to liquidate my assets and move to another part of the country to go to school, and then I had to move overseas to go to school, and I'm not saying at the time, I say, well, I'm going to do this as a good work, it was just what I had to do, but that's what good works means, and when you're starting out in deep arrears like the Cretans were, they were living in a culture where almost nothing was done that could be called a good work, and in fact, it was upside down. The things that really are good probably were resisted, and what was kind of endorsed were kind of the shady typical things, just like we have cultures that like, they really like to use drugs, that's cool, and being straight is not cool. It's good to be, kind of edgy and maybe over the line, even illegal, that's good.

That's the way we do things here. That was Crete. Wild and crazy.

Good works are revolutionary, but the gospel flows immediately over into a change of life in which if we're living in that kind of a setting, suddenly we find we're being nudged in a different direction. Suddenly our consciences become aware of things that everybody else is doing, and we don't want to be a part of those things. I remember when I was logging, one of the first really good jobs I had, it was for a big company, I think it was called U.S. Plywood back then, and then it became Champion International, and it was winter, and it was very cold, and we were working outside, but we had what was called a crummy, and the crummy was like a big crew bus, and if you were working close enough to the crummy that it wasn't too far to walk when you quit sawing, because we were spread out all over the place, because you can't fell timber close to each other, you'll kill each other, but people would get onto the

bus and eat their lunch, because we had the heater on, and people would listen to a radio announcer called Paul Harvey, and eat your lunch, and most people then they'd smoke cigarettes, but people talked, and it was very profane talk.

People cussed a lot, and sometimes people would tell jokes that were not very nice jokes. It's a bunch of men, and there was this guy who would always sit out, and one day we were there, and he was sitting in the snow out there eating his lunch, and I'm thinking, it's 10 degrees, and snow's up to your waist, and John is out there in the cold, why doesn't he come on the bus, and later on I learned that he was a Christian, and he said, it's just not good for my soul to be in there, because of the language, and at the time I kind of laughed at him. I wasn't that far along in my Christian life, and I was very used to swearing because I'd grown up around it so much, but that was an example of somebody who felt convicted.

I should have felt convicted, I wasn't, but he felt convicted by that language, and also, he didn't mind people disparaging his Christianity, because he wanted to be a witness, and he was a witness to other people, and they laughed at him for it, but that was a good work that he felt he needed to perform for the sake of his relationship with God, and that's the kind of thing that we're dealing with here. These are excellent and profitable for everyone, but avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law. If you connect that with the circumcision group earlier in Titus, this is again an indication we're probably talking about Jewish influence.

Avoid controversies, because they're unprofitable and useless. Now what happens when, you're trying to be positive, you're trying to minister the gospel, you're trying to help the different age groups, you're affirming Christ, you're affirming his death for us, you're affirming the new life, you're affirming the grace of God, but you've got a divisive person. He says to warn the divisive person once, and I think here of Jesus in Matthew 18 saying, if someone sins against you, go to them in private, and if you come to terms, well great.

Then if they won't listen to you, then bring two or three people, and if they won't listen to you, then take it to the church and disfellowship the person. This is what Paul's doing here. Then warn them a second time, and on the assumption that they don't come around, after that, have nothing to do with them.

Now this is very brief, because I don't think he wants to get into the gory details, and I think he probably didn't need to, because I think he and Titus had been together through the years in church situations, and they had seen how this works. But you may be sure that such people are warped and sinful. They are self-condemned.

That's very important. It's not that Titus is condemning them. It's not that Paul is condemning them.

They have made a decision to be out of line with the apostolic teaching, and even to this day, we have issues in churches sometimes. We have it going on right now where people are proposing new moralities, things that people used to think the Bible said is wrong, and now people want to say, well, we want to be inclusive. And if you're not inclusive, then you're accused of being judgmental and condemning people.

But Paul is saying to Titus, don't let people do that evasive move. They are condemning themselves. God's word hasn't changed.

If we decide that it's okay for us to do in the name of God what God says you ought not to do, you are condemning yourself. The people who point out, look, you're saying we can do this. God's word says this is an abomination.

They can't say, they will say, but they can't say honestly and legitimately, you are condemning us. No, they have condemned themselves, and we are simply honoring the heritage that God has given his people. God has given his people a heritage in many, many respects, but since I'm using sexual respect, he's given us a heritage of heterosexual monogamy.

It's a great thing, and it's to be honored. Hebrews 13 says the marriage bed is to be honored by all. And that's what it means to be in the Christian heritage.

And going back to the time of Titus, we want to change that heritage. We don't know exactly what they were going after. Were they going after Jesus' messiahship? Were they going after morals in some? I mean, it's impossible to tell because there were so many possibilities that creep between the synagogue and Jews by and large who did not accept Jesus as the Messiah, and then the morality of the pagan world being in a sorry state.

We don't know what kind of toxic mix these people who opposed Paul and opposed Titus and resisted. They needed to be warned. They needed to be corrected.

They needed to be rebuked. We don't know the exact form that it took, but that's kind of a blessing because if we knew the exact form, then we could limit all this to just one thing, but we can't. So, it's really kind of an omnibus bill here.

Whatever it is that is dividing a person from God's will for God's people if a person persists in it, warn them a second time, and then after that, we might say they're not communicant members of the church anymore. Don't act like they're Christians when they continue to defy what is fundamental to being Christian. Now again, I'm not talking about they're wearing jeans and you're not supposed to wear jeans to church.

We're talking about the sorts of things that are central attacks on Christian belief or practice. He says these wonderful things have been poured out on us, and that verb for poured out appears in Joel, which is quoted at Pentecost. The spirit is poured out on God's people.

It's a lavish outflow, and the adverb generously or richly augments that picture of abundance. Paul envisions a rich stream of the Holy Spirit coming on individuals, coming on the body, and he uses that same image with a similar word when he says the Holy Spirit is poured out into our hearts in Romans 5:5. In an age of charismatic influence in the world church, thoughts may turn here to the emotional enhancement of spiritual experience, and that may be partially true. In the first-century context, we don't know people's emotional states, but probably part of this is a reference to the exhilaration of historically hostile parties finding the joy of mutual respect, charity, and joint service in Christ's name.

I think here of unfeigned divinely enabled acceptance of one another and worship side by side with Arab Christians and persecuted Sudanese, which I saw when I was in Sudan. There were even converts from Islam who became Christians, and they worshiped with the black Africans who were out in the society, they hated the Arab descent people because Arab descent people had killed and enslaved them for centuries, and they culturally looked down on the black African people because they were just people to be enslaved from their cultural point of view, but in Christ, these people came together, and today we can find Messianic Jews and Palestinians who fellowship in Christ, or we find whites and blacks in the United States working together as brothers and sisters in Christ, or we find in places like Rwanda Christians across tribal lines who 20-odd, almost 30 years ago, the better part of a million people were killed mainly by machetes and spears and things because of tribal conflict. Christ brings together people who kill each other in their native state.

Believers find themselves united by the reality of Christ's healing presence. And don't forget, Paul's Jewish. Titus is Gentile.

Even the two of them working together would be a contradiction in terms to newer Cretan Christians who aren't, they're not Jewish, and they see Paul had been there, and now he's writing. This is a Jew and Gentile, and I'm sure there were some Jews who had converted to Christianity in the church. This is one of the greatest signs of the age to come.

And I'm happy about a feeling of emotional happiness, but I've seen emotional racists, people who get jazzed up about Jesus and not be very charitable to other people. So, I don't think that the greatest token of the outpouring was likely to be emotional, although I'm sure they had rich praise times. I think the emotion grew out

of the regard for one another and the recognition, that our world is at war, and we are on the front lines of bringing shalom.

And when you are really involved in Christianity that's across cultural lines, you're always aware of it. But you're also always aware of how God is building bridges. And what a precious thing it is to trust other people who are of an ethnicity that they don't like you, but you've got a bond and a trust and a mutual acceptance.

And they trust you. And, they're looked down on by certain people in their group. Why are you trusting that guy? He's an American or he's white or whatever.

And then the American people, why are you going to that place with those people? We don't like those people. You can't trust these people. It's not safe to be around these people and so forth.

That was, for Paul, that was the biggest thing. The reality of the gospel. Read Ephesians 2 and you'll see he says, he is our peace who made the two men one.

And he likens the Gentile world and the Jewish world to human beings. And he said, in Christ, we are reconciled. And that's what the cross did, the social dimension of the atonement.

Whatever the historical animosities, believers find themselves united by the reality of God's healing presence. As Christ was filled with love for Samaritans, Jesus was Jewish, Galilean. He loved the Samaritans.

And he was full of love for Jerusalem. He wept over Jerusalem and it killed him. He forgave the thief on the cross.

He asked for forgiveness for the ones who crucified him. Paul went from killing Christians to being a Christian. In all of these examples, we see the possibility for Titus and for others on Crete to move from indifference to other people, aversion to other people, and loathing of different people.

The Cretans, by their own admission, were pretty, were pretty criminal-like in a lot of our dealings. Were pretty mafia-like. They can move to a proclamation of the gospel that reconciles people and helps people apprehend the joy of fellowship and working together and improving their lives and improving other people's lives by the good works that they have because of the confession of faith that they make.

This leads to final remarks. Paul says, as soon as I send Artemis or Tychicus to us, so, Paul's out there doing something, preaching, planning a church, traveling. He's going to send two of his entourage to Titus on Crete.

As I do that, you do your best to come to me at Nicopolis because I've decided to winter there. And for some reason, he wants Titus to be there. Once you got into the fall season, they didn't travel by boat anymore in the Mediterranean because it was too dangerous.

The storms were unpredictable and the boats, were not very seaworthy. Do everything you can to help Zenos the lawyer and Apollos on their way. Apparently, they're traveling by and they'll be stopping at Crete.

See that they have everything they need. This was how the missions at the time operated, is people would come and they would show up and, the church there, part of the reason it took up collections was to provision the church workers, they couldn't wire money or, call on the phone or something like that. They had to, like, show up and then they needed money on hand to see that they had everything they needed.

That's shorthand for, give them, buy their boat ticket or give them the money that they need, feed them, clothe them, and so forth. Our people must learn to devote themselves to, guess what, good works. So, this is the last thing he says.

In order, and it just says final remarks. All the other headings except the opening had work, and had good in it, but you could have put good here too. Final remarks, good works.

In order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives. Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace be with you all. And that, of course, is plural, with you all. Now I want to comment on that last verse.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote a book, *Life Together*, that describes Christian existence. *Gemeinsames Leben*, it was in German. Life with God in Christ, life with other believers, life with your family members, life with others in the family of God.

The community dimension was strong among Jesus and his followers. They were a group, and it was reinforced in the early days of gospel faith in Acts, where believers had everything in common. That included some material things, but that grew out of things that were spiritual.

It grew out of the apostles' preaching and the sharing of bread in communion. Some three decades after Pentecost, as Paul completes this epistle, this pattern of community continues. And so at the end, he conveys greetings to Titus and others in Crete, not just from himself, but from others with Paul who share the convictions and the commitments of the community.

When he says, greet those who love us in the faith, he expresses special affection for those who resonate with the apostolic faith that Paul is affirming and that Titus is laboring to uphold. There are some who do not share that stance who, because of their sin, may have left the church body, one commentator notes. Social realities in Crete, human nature, and the resistance of a fallen world to God's kingdom are always going to conspire to frustrate harmonious community relations and productive faith expression.

So, Paul closes with the key to kingdom existence. The key to kingdom existence is grace. Grace be with you all, not just to Titus, but to all who join him in worship and in service to God and Christ their Savior.

This shift to the plural may imply that Paul knew the letter would be read to the whole church, or it may simply acknowledge that in writing with a pastor's heart, at the same time, he was writing to a social collective. He wasn't just writing to an isolated thinker. The true shepherd or undershepherd is one with the flock.

And I think Titus was a true shepherd. Paul's pronouncement of grace comes at the end or near the end of all his extant letters. A lot of manuscripts add amen as the last word, though here the best witnesses don't have amen.

Paul and Titus had a long history. He didn't need to school Titus on the centrality and magnificence of gospel grace. He's already done that in the letter.

This grace offers salvation to all people. This grace justifies so that they may become heirs of this noble heritage. Grace is going to sustain Titus in the difficult tasks that he faces as grace links believers across the stretches of the Roman Empire.

Crete was just part of a network, an expanding network of churches, and congregations. Grace continues to transform people who receive the gospel message in all corners of the globe as God's promise of redemption unfolds and as the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ approaches. And so strong is that grace today that as I speak in 2022, and again according to the stats of the Center for the Global Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell, we are a state in the world today where if we talk about Protestants, this is just a number that sticks in my head, the percentage of Protestants in the world who are in North America is about 10 percent.

And the percentage of Protestants in the world in Europe is around 12-13 percent. You may have heard Christianity is a white man's religion, but actually in the 1960s already, because of an expansion of Christianity in the world, which Western thinkers have tended to ignore, but already in the 60s the majority of the world's Christian

population was no longer white. And so, by this time 18 percent of the Christians in the world are in Asia.

Another 18 percent of the Protestants in the world are in South America. As for Protestants in the world, 10 percent are in North America, and 44 percent are in Africa. The flow of the Gospel has been away from its former stronghold.

There was a Reformation, which was the beginning of what we call Protestant Christianity. That Reformation was in Germany, and Reformation has been a European and then a North American phenomenon. And it was out of the Reformation churches that finally there was a missionary movement and the Gospel was taken to South America and to Africa and to Asia.

And for many, many generations not a lot happened. And Catholics too were taking the Gospel or taking Catholicism to various parts of the world, which kind of had a supporting effect on what Protestants were trying to do. But it wasn't until well into the 20th century that an explosion began which nobody could predict and nobody really at first could believe.

In 1950, China expelled all missionaries who had been there for about a century with very little to show. They had maybe half a million Christians after a hundred years. And they were called rice Christians by the Chinese.

They were just with the missionaries to get food, they said. And then one of the worst persecutions of the church that has happened in the church's history was under the Chinese Communist government from 1950 to 1980. In 1980, I was really getting into my theological studies and the world was changing politically and China opened up.

And people started to make reports, there are a lot of Christians in China now. And the reports at the time were saying, it appears that now there are 10 or 20 or 30 or 50 million Christians in China. Well, whether you go from 500,000 to 10 million, 20 million, 30 million or more, how can that happen under persecution? And something analogous has happened in Africa, Asia, more broadly, South America, in a secular age where in the West the idea was we're going to become less and less religious because we're going to become more technological.

We're going to become smarter. We're going to realize that religion is the cause of war and problems and, let's get rid of religion, and then we'll have a better world. What has happened is actually in the last half century the world has become more and more religious.

On the negative side, this often has resulted in more deaths, in more wars, and it's especially been rough on Christianity because I said in an earlier lecture, the Center

for the Study of Global Christianity thinks that roughly 247 people a day on an annual basis and a decade basis are killed because of their Christian faith. That's 90,000 a year. So, yes, there's killing going on of Christians.

At the same time, Christianity has been expanding at a prodigious rate. And I say all this to underscore the power of the grace of God. I don't know where it will lead.

I don't know what percentage of people who now are registering as Christians are going to turn out to be Christians. I do know that the same problems that we find in the book of Titus are going to be problems and are problems for the church around the world. There will be false teachers.

There will be people who fall away. There will be people who come in and they're just what the Germans call Scheinchristen, Christians in appearance only. We call them nominal Christians.

The church will have amazing difficulties in the times ahead. But I also know that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church. And that has been true since Jesus uttered those words.

God's saving work in the world is unstoppable. It's not predictable, but it cannot be thwarted. And that has been true since Genesis 3.15 and Genesis chapter 12 and all those other crossroads in the history of humanity and crossroads in the history of God's promises to his people and God's work in the world.

At all those crossroads it's been true. God's work has been opposed and it has looked at any given time like it might all come to an end right here. And especially when the champion of God's promise was arrested and was mocked and was beaten and tortured and gave up his spirit.

I think the devil was clapping and certainly Jesus' enemy said, we've made an end to this, and what we're going to put a guard by the tomb to make sure that this thing is finished. But something? He rose and things are still moving forward. And so I want to encourage you in the grace that the book of Titus encourages us in and believe it, trust it, be rich in good works, and bring honor and glory to God through his grace.

Thank you.

This is Dr. Robert Yarbrough in his teaching on the Pastoral Epistles, Apostolic Instruction for Pastoral Leaders and Their Followers. Session 14, Titus 3.