

Dr. Robert Yarbrough, Pastoral Epistles, Session 14,

Titus 3 - The Pastoral Epistles: Apostolic Instruction for Pastoral Leaders and Their Followers

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All right, let's dive in. Today, we're going deep with, well, with Titus chapter 3, and our guide is Dr. Robert Yarbrough. Oh, he's such a great guy for this sort of thing, you know, really digs in.

He does. It's easy to just read through Titus and see like a list of rules, you know, do this, don't do that. Right, right.

But I think what Dr. Yarbrough helps us do is uncover, well, the heart of what Paul's saying to Titus and how that speaks to us now. Absolutely. Absolutely.

So throughout Titus, Dr. Yarbrough comes back to this idea of doing good, and chapter 3 is no different. But what I found interesting is that he's not saying, "Oh, we do good to earn salvation. Right.

Yeah, no, he's really careful about that. He's saying that good works are a response to grace. It's like, okay, imagine a family where the kids feel totally loved and secure; they don't do their chores begrudgingly. They want to help; they're eager.

That's the kind of heart transformation that Dr. Yarbrough is talking about. Yeah, I love that. So how does grace connect to what Paul's saying here in chapter 3? Well, Dr. Yarbrough points out that this whole chapter, it's like it's anchored in the work of Christ and the gift of grace.

Yeah, so you discover pretty quickly that this chapter rests on this powerful foundation of the theology of grace. And he uses this incredible phrase: it's the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. Wow, that phrase just paints such a vivid picture.

Doesn't it? Can you unpack that a bit more for me? Like, what does that actually look like in a person's life? Well, imagine this: you're not just forgiven; you're made completely new through the Holy Spirit, and that's how we become heirs of eternal life. It's a gift, not something that we earn. And then this new life, that's what empowers us to do those good works out of love and gratitude, not- not obligation.

Exactly. Now, I want to step back in time for a second with Dr. Yarbrough to ancient Crete. You won't believe what he reveals about the culture back then.

Oh yeah. It sounds... Well, it doesn't sound like a place known for its morals. Oh, it really wasn't; it was a wild place.

Dr. Yarbrough describes a culture where religion and ethics were just totally separate. Really? Yeah. People might participate in the rituals, but their daily lives often didn't reflect any kind of moral code.

So how did Christianity change things? How did it impact that? It was revolutionary. I mean, Christianity called people to live differently. Not based on cultural norms or empty rituals, but on the very character of God.

Wow. That's huge. It is.

And that's what makes Paul's letter to Titus so relevant for us today. Right. Because it's about living out the Christian faith, but in a culture that doesn't really understand it.

And even Dr. Yarbrough shares this funny anecdote. Oh, I love his stories. Which one? It's about logging in the Northwest.

Oh yeah, yeah. That illustrates this point perfectly. You're talking about the man who would sit outside in the freezing cold to eat his lunch.

Yes. That's the one. Because he didn't want to be on the logging bus with all the profanity.

Everyone thought he was crazy, but... But he was making a choice based on his faith. And he knew what he believed in, and he wasn't willing to compromise, even if it made him seem different. Yeah.

That really makes you think, huh, how do we stand firm in our faith when we're in similar situations today? Do we blend in, or do we hold fast to our convictions, even if it seems strange to others? It's tough, right? It's a challenge. It is. And it leads us to another important issue that Paul addresses in his letter to Titus.

What happens when you encounter, well, divisive people within the church? Oh yeah. Right? That's a challenge we still face. All the time.

How do we deal with people who claim to be Christians, but they're causing conflict and division within the church? It's tricky. Paul gives Titus some pretty specific instructions. So he says to warn them once, and then warn them a second time.

And then if they persist in their divisive behavior- and nothing to do with them. Yeah. Sounds harsh, doesn't it? It does.

But Dr. Yarbrough points out that this isn't about being judgmental or writing people off. It's about protecting the unity of the church and its integrity. Paul emphasizes that these individuals are self-condemned.

That's powerful. But how do we know when someone is truly self-condemned versus just, you know- oh, that's the question, isn't it? Just struggling. Yeah.

Struggling with their faith. Where do we draw that line? It's tough. It really is a question that I think we should be asking ourselves regularly.

Discernment is key. And it's not always easy. Paul isn't advocating for a quick judgment.

It's more like a process of loving confrontation and restoration, if possible. So we need to balance grace with a commitment to truth. Yeah, absolutely.

And I think this is where the image of the Holy Spirit being poured out generously on believers becomes so powerful. Dr. Yarbrough reminds us that this outpouring is not just about emotions. It's about the incredible unity it creates, like among people who historically might have been enemies.

He even shared his own experience seeing this kind of unity firsthand in Sudan, right? Yeah. He talked about seeing Arab and black African Christians worshiping together, despite the deep animosity between their cultures. It's a powerful testament, isn't it, to the power of the gospel to break down walls and bring people together.

Like a little preview of heaven. People from every tribe and tongue and nation, all united by their love for Christ. Speaking of the global church, Dr. Yarbrough really broadened the scope in this lecture.

He does, doesn't he? He's got that global perspective. And he talked about this explosive growth of Christianity in parts of the world that we might not typically think of as Christian strongholds. It's amazing, isn't it? It is.

It's happening all over. Yeah. And he challenged the idea that Christianity is primarily a Western thing.

Right. Not anymore, no. Yeah.

And he shared some pretty amazing statistics. Oh, yeah. They were mind-blowing.

From the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, highlighting the incredible growth of the church in Africa, Asia, and South America. And it's growing faster there than anywhere else in the world. That's amazing.

He even mentioned that roughly 247 people are killed every single day for their Christian faith. Wow. That's almost 90,000 people a year.

Oh, that's heartbreaking. It's hard to even fathom. It is, isn't it? Yeah.

It reminds us that the Christian faith isn't always easy or comfortable. Yeah. There are real costs to following Jesus.

But even in the face of that kind of persecution, the church is still growing at this astounding rate. Yeah. It's unstoppable, almost.

And Dr. Yarber, he pointed out that this growth isn't limited to any one denomination or theological camp. Right. It's happening across the board.

Yeah, it's across the board. That's what's so remarkable about it. And I think that's, you know, part of what makes Paul's letter to Titus so relevant for us today.

You know, even though it was written centuries ago, the principles he outlines, they're timeless. Right. And universally applicable.

So how does a letter written to a pastor on the island of Crete speak to the global church? It's a great question. In the 21st century, what are those timeless principles? One of the key takeaways is this emphasis on doing good works. You know, not to earn our salvation, like we talked about earlier, but as a natural overflow of our gratitude for God's grace.

And Dr. Yarber reminds us that good works, they're not just about, you know, being nice. They're about reflecting the character of God in our words and our actions in a way that makes people take notice. Like, it's about living in a way that points people to Jesus, even in a culture that may be hostile to the gospel.

Yeah. And this idea of maintaining unity within the church, it's another crucial principle Paul talks about, about dealing with divisive individuals wisely, correcting false teaching, and striving for peace and harmony within the body of Christ. But how do we do that in a world where there are so many different interpretations of Scripture and so much theological disagreement? Like, how do we maintain unity without compromising truth? That's the million-dollar question, isn't it? I think Dr. Yarber would say it starts with humility, recognizing that we don't have all the answers, you know, and that there's room for different perspectives within the framework of Orthodox Christian belief.

So it's not about silencing dissent or demanding absolute uniformity? No, no, not at all. It's about, you know, engaging in respectful dialogue, being willing to listen to those who hold different views, and always remembering that our primary allegiance is to Christ, not to a particular theological system. But what about those situations where, you know, someone is intentionally spreading false teaching or deliberately causing division within the church? Like, how do we deal with those situations? Yes, that's where Paul's instructions to Titus about confronting divisive individuals become so important.

You know, he talks about warning them once, then warning them a second time. And if they persist in their behavior, having nothing to do with them. That sounds pretty radical.

It does, doesn't it? Yeah. But Dr. Yarber, he pointed out that this isn't about, you know, being unloving or judgmental. It's about protecting the flock from those who would, you know, lead them astray.

So it's like a form of spiritual surgery? Like sometimes you have to remove a cancerous growth to protect the health of the whole body? That's a good analogy, but it's important to remember that this is always a last resort. Like, the goal is always, you know, restoration and reconciliation, if at all possible. Dr. Yarber also made an interesting point about the community dimension of Paul's letter to Titus.

He reminded us that this wasn't just, you know, a private letter meant for Titus's eyes only. No, not at all. It was intended to be read aloud to the entire church.

That's right. And I think it, you know, highlights the importance of community in the Christian life. We're not meant to live this out, you know, in isolation.

We need each other. Yeah. We need the support, the encouragement, the accountability that comes from being part of a body of believers.

It's like that old African proverb, right? If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. I love that.

Yeah, that's perfect. And in the Christian life, I mean, we're definitely in it for the long haul. For the long haul, for sure.

So we need each other. Yeah, we do. Dr. Yarbrough ended this lecture with a thought-provoking observation.

He said that while the global growth of the church is encouraging, it's not without its challenges. There will always be false teachers, divisive individuals, and those who try to distort the message of the gospel. Always, yeah.

So as we move into the final part of our deep dive, I want to leave you with this question. What are some of the most effective ways to combat these challenges and ensure that the church remains a beacon of truth and light in an increasingly dark world? That's a question, you know? We can't just sit back and hope for the best, right? We need to be proactive in guarding the truth and protecting the unity of the church. Yeah, and I think Dr. Yarbrough would say that one of the most effective ways to do that is by, you know, cultivating a church culture that's deeply rooted in love, truth, and grace.

Like, remember those early Christians we talked about earlier? They faced incredible opposition. We did. But they thrived because they were known for their love for one another, their sacrificial service, and their unwavering commitment to the truth.

Yeah, absolutely. It's like, you know, it's not just about having the right doctrine or theological arguments. It's about living out our faith in a way that's attractive and compelling to those who are searching for truth.

It's about being a living example of the transformative power of the gospel. That makes sense. But how do we do that, like practically? What does that look like in a local church setting? Well, for starters, I think it means emphasizing the importance of discipleship, equipping believers with a deep understanding of Scripture so that they can discern truth from error.

And it also means fostering a culture of genuine community where people feel loved, accepted, and supported. Because when people feel connected and cared for, they're less likely to be swayed by false teaching or drawn into divisive conflicts. Exactly.

It's like, you know, like a family. When you have a strong, healthy family unit, you're better equipped to face challenges from the outside world. That's good.

But what about those situations where, despite our best efforts, someone is intentionally spreading false teaching or causing division within the church? What do we do then? That's where Paul's instructions to Titus about confronting divisive individuals become so relevant. You know, he tells Titus to warn them once, then warn them a second time. And if they persist in their behavior, to have nothing to do with them.

That seems so counterintuitive, though. Shouldn't we be trying to reach out to them even more, like to show them love and grace? We absolutely should be motivated by love and a

desire for their restoration. But Dr. Yarbrough points out that sometimes the most loving thing we can do is to draw a clear boundary.

Oh. You know, it's like a surgeon removing a cancerous tumor. Right.

It's a painful process. Yeah. But it's necessary for the health of the whole body.

So it's not about condemning the person, but protecting the church from the harm that their behavior is causing. Exactly. And it's important to remember that this is always a last resort.

You know, we should always strive for reconciliation and restoration whenever possible. But there are times when, for the sake of the unity and integrity of the church, we need to take a firm stand. This has been such an eye-opening conversation.

Oh, good. I feel like I have a much better understanding of the challenges facing the church today and the principles we can apply to navigate those challenges effectively. I agree.

It's a reminder that the Christian life is not a spectator sport. It's not. No.

No. No, it's not. We're all called to be active participants in the work of the gospel, to contend for the faith and to build up the body of Christ.

Yes, absolutely. And it's a reminder that we don't have to do it alone. That's right.

We have the power of the Holy Spirit, the truth of God's word, and the support of our fellow believers to equip us for the journey. That's so important to remember, yeah. This deep dive into Titus chapter 3 has given us a lot to think about.

It really has. We've explored the transformative power of grace, the importance of doing good works, and the challenge of maintaining unity in the midst of diversity. It's not easy.

That's for sure. And the courage it takes to stand up for truth in a culture that often opposes it. What stood out to you the most from our exploration? It's tough to pick just one thing, but I think for me, it was just that reminder that we're not in this alone.

We have each other. We have God's word. We have the Holy Spirit.

That's so good. As you continue to reflect on these timeless principles, may you be inspired and equipped to live out your faith with boldness and compassion and an unwavering commitment to the gospel. That's a great way to put it.

Thanks for having me on this deep dive. I really enjoyed it. Oh, thank you for being here.

It's been such a pleasure having you, and thanks to all of you for joining us on this deep dive. We'll see you next time.