

Engaged in Good Deeds

Beautifying the Bride, p.3

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Well, take your Bibles and go to Titus chapter 3. By the way, those aren't just words in a song, that's a reality I live in. I'm resting in his power that holds me. If he's not holding you, you're a mess, you're a wretched mess. He holds me in justification. He's holding me in progressive sanctification. And he'll hold me for eternity in wondrous glorification one day.

Paul is writing this letter to Titus. If you haven't been with us, we're going through this pastoral epistle. Titus is a younger man that Paul has appointed to the daunting task of straightening out, getting things back in order in the somewhat disorderly uh, uncouth, maybe you could say carnal, even to some degree rebellious churches on the island of Crete. Paul's toward the end of his life and I guess it gives us pastors who've been at it a long time some encouragement that you go to your grave. Dr. Seale still straightening things out, still helping the church do better as hopefully God's helping us pastors do better. We don't get done till we get to heaven. So as he writes, we come to chapter 3 and we're gonna look at verses 3 and 4, three words of verse 5, and the middle words of verse 8. Pastor, why are you doing this? Because I think it's the proper way to exegete the text and get the full meaning of what's going on, and there's way too much between verse 3 and verse 8 for us to just go through here. I've entitled the unpacking of this exposition, "Engaged in Good Deeds." Engaged in Good Deeds. And far from threatening the members of the churches on the island of Crete with, if you don't do right, if you don't engage in good deeds, God's gonna whack you, he's gonna get you. Well, there is discipline from the Lord, we do know that but the primary motivation to keep God's children engaged in good deeds is to never get over the goodness of God and that's basically where Paul's coming from.

Verse 3, Titus chapter 3. "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another." Verse 4, "But when the kindness of God our Savior," or this saving God, "and His love for mankind appeared," then verse 5, three words, "He saved us." We'll unpack the rest of this next time, Lord willing. Now verse 8, "This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men." I., as we unpack this together, notice the enslavement we once knew.

The enslavement we once knew. He begins verse 3 by showing us subpoint A that this was an all inclusive enslavement. There are not just a few or some of the the worst behaving ones who were enslaved, all are. Notice how he words it in verse 3, "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved in various lusts and pleasures." Now in this phrase, Paul includes himself, he says "we." He includes Titus. He includes all the members of the churches on the island of Crete and he includes all of us. It's all inclusive. Before Christ freed you, you were hopelessly enslaved.

So here we have Paul lumps us all together. This is the way he can keep us aware and this is a way he keeps us motivated that we once were something else but now we are God's children, and we need to often, if you will, contemplate what we are apart from Christ. You see, you need the gospel preached to you every day, you need the gospel preached to you every week to remind us of fresh of what we are naturally speaking before our God. It's all inclusive, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. There's no one born into this world apart from Jesus Christ himself who's not born in the iron bars of the stronghold of a sinful and fallen corrupt condition. When you were a one-celled human being in the womb of your mother, every cell of your being was corrupted and polluted by sin. Well, that's that's why Ephesians 2 said you were by nature the children of wrath. Before you've done anything, your very nature cried for God's holy wrath to come against you. It's all inclusive. We all are in this condition. You see, we don't become sinners because we sin. No, you can take a little child and as soon as they understand anything, "It's mine," it's selfish, it's take, it's lying. Children just naturally do these things. Why? Because it's all inclusive. We're all locked up under fallenness, depravity and sin.

Well, this is an enslavement we're born with. It's an enslavement we live in but secondly, notice subpoint B, notice our ugly and vile condition. He gives some descriptives here to describe what all are like and to the members of the churches on the island of Crete and to us what path we were on before Christ changed us. So he listens, he lists rather in verse 2, these uh uh seven things, actually, I'm start starting in verse um, yes starting in verse 2 and then going through verse 3, these seven vices, if you will, that depict our former state.

Now, let's look at the first two. The first two are God-ward. It says we were there in uh uh verse um 2, um I'm sorry, I've messed that up three or four times. Verse 3, we also once were foolish ourselves. Foolish ourselves. Foolishness means without understanding. It means darkened in our understanding, blinded to the truth of God or the reality of God, or having any desire for and treasuring or embracing of God's wisdom. That's where we all were. Got there, now, there are a lot of people who come into the world and they'll uh be proud of themselves, so they'll want to have some ethical or moral behavior, and they may discipline themselves for ethical and moral behavior, but here's the missing link, they don't link it to the fact that they love and honor God. It's about them and that in itself is foolishness. Everything is to be connected to God, our Creator. But that's not the way we come into the world.

We were all originally foolish about God, the need to love God, to honor God, to joy in God, to esteem God, to obey God, and that's why he continues with the second vice here,

disobedient. We were all once foolish, ourselves disobedient. This is the idea of being led astray into error. We wandered aimlessly and in error, and we were totally unable to right ourselves, foolishly and disobediently.

And then the third one, he says, we were deceived and enslaved. What what a picture this is. Uh so we had this uh foolishness in our hearts. We had this uh deception that we were living in, blinded to what really mattered, blinded to the truth of who God is and what God expected and how we should honor God and put God first, and then he uses another descriptive to add more strength to this terrible, violent, uh ugly condition we're in, enslaved. This is a slave that does things involuntarily. This is a slave that's in complete bondage.

And then he amplifies that even even further in verse 3, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures. Uh the word various there and I'm gonna I'm gonna unpack this and stay here for a little bit, the word various there means multifaceted. He said, he said, man is so fallen and man is so sinful he doesn't just sin, his sin never stands still. Sin always multiplies. Sin always metastasizes in the soul. It never sits still. Listen to me friend, you can't play with sin and lay it down when you want to. The old evangelists used to say that sin takes you further than you want to go and keeps you longer than you want to stay and costs you more than you want to pay. And he says, your condition, our condition, everyone's condition before they're saved is that they are enslaved to various multifaceted lust. That's the word various. It means a a conglomeration of multiplying uh multifaceted evils. That doesn't mean you performed or lived in every evil you are capable of, but it meant that was the path you were on and you could not stop it, and if you did have some moral decency about you, it was all about yourself and all about glorifying yourself and all about proving how good you were. It wasn't about God at all.

The lust here, when he says you're involved in these multiplying, multifaceted, metastasizing, sinful lusts in your life. It it's the lust that comes out of the godless world. It's the lust that marks the anti-God system that you and I presently live in, a world that does not love God but loves self. And a world that does not love God but loves self will not embrace God's wisdom or truth. So they substitute God's wisdom for man's so-called wisdom and that's what's got us in the mess we're in in our our world today, in our country today with the the gross perversions and evils that are being glorified and celebrated in today's culture. This is this is as contemporary as today's news, is it not? The various multifaceted evils that man can come up with.

It reminds me of the ancient Greek empire, uh as as I've told you many times. You know, you sent Pam and I to Greece for our 40th anniversary here on staff and and what an edifying and enlightening trip it was for me, for Pam too. We just were so blessed by going all those places where Paul ministered. And I would try to read up history on the ancient Greeks and you know, there were times in the in the Greek empire that they had to continually reinvent terms for all the sexual perversions they came up with. So when we see today, our culture coming up, brothers and sisters, would you even imagine 20 years ago, people could even think up some of the things that our culture now embraces and glories in.

Multifaceted the text says, various lust and pleasures, and that's why we have this alphabet of sexual deviancies that just seems to never end. At first it was L and G and then they added B, and I'm afraid they're going to have to go to other languages to find more letters. For example, I just looked at one of the more recent ones. LGBTQQIPSAA. I'm not making this up. L is lesbian, G is gay, B is bisexual, T is transgendered, Q is queer, the second Q is questioning, the I is intersex, the P is pansexual, the two S is two spirits, comes from the American Indians or something, I don't know. The A is asexual, then the last A is an ally, you may not do all these things, but you're an ally for these things. And they call this progressive. This is old degeneracy and digression. It was around in the old Greek empire. There's nothing new to this. They're not progressing, they're digressing, friend. Why? Because they're enslaved to multifaceted, multiplying, metastasizing lusts and pleasures. It just never ends.

Now look, it doesn't mean we don't love all people. We're to have compassion for all people, but we must speak the truth and pastors must proclaim these things clearly. The next generation depends upon it. And so many who align themselves with this multifaceted, ever multiplying, metastasizing lust and sinful pleasures, to validate themselves, they want to openly promote their gospel, and especially, they want to reach the children. Grooming, it's often called. You see, children are born with a sin nature. They're born with a propensity to be allured into lust and sin. That's why our children must be protected from all corrupting influence, no matter the cost or inconvenience, period. I thank God for good and godly and moral people in our school system, administrators and teachers. We have a bunch of them. Thank God for your mission work but there may come a day when we can't send our kids to these schools anymore. It doesn't matter. We'll start one ourselves if we have to. We are not selling our children to those who are enslaved to various multifaceted, multiplying, metastasizing lusts and immoralities. They're doing this because if they can reach the children, have more and more people embracing this, they validate themselves.

Well, Paul tells us, he tells Titus, and Titus tells us that the path we were all on was this path. It doesn't have to be these particular sins. This is just a good illustration of how the multiplication keeps going. And if I might just back up and say this to you again, do I not remember correctly 20, 25 years ago when the first movement to uh uh legalize gay marriage, we just kept hearing the statement, "Oh, no, it's just two people that love each other, that's all, just two people that love each other. That's all they're asking for. Two men love each other, just let them be married. Two women love each other, just there to be a lifetime bond and a lifetime commitment." And all of a sudden we've gone from two people loving each other to about the whole alphabet being taken up with perversions and things they demand us to embrace and celebrate. Now again, we can love all people, we can be kind to all people but we are not going to embrace and celebrate these wickednesses. I don't want mine celebrated. If I have a sinful struggle in my life, I want you to call it out. I want you to teach and preach against it. I need the help. And you need the help.

So, once you're not God's disciple, or rather I should say, if you're not God's disciple, you're a self-disciple and when you look into yourself, you find a cesspool of iniquity and then you find selfish lust and pleasures, as this text explicitly states, and these are the natural outworkings of our life. So not only do we see here these four vices that we've just covered, we're foolish, we're disobedient, we're deceived, and then enslaved to various lustful pleasures, he keeps on and amplifies our ugly and vile condition before Christ, spending our life in malice. It's an evil and hard-hearted person cultivating a mindset to injure or destroy others who get in our way. Have you watched the news lately? Is there not a a a almost a professional league of those who have a complete mindset that if you do not affirm us, embrace us, and give us our way, we would do everything possible to destroy you? Now regardless of Donald Trump's personal character issues, this is a perfect description of a group just saying we don't agree with you and we are going to destroy you. It's malice. And we're all like that if God didn't rescue us.

Then he uses envy, that's the sixth thing he mentions here, envy and envy. It's the desire to take what others have. But here's the point, when you envy, you don't just desire what others have, you desire that you have it and that they don't have it. It's a little bit different from jealousy. That kind of spirit is common in a person who does not know God and spent their lives away from God.

And then hateful and hating one another is the seventh vice that describes our ugly and vile condition before conversion. Hating and hateful means an odious and detestable spirit. These are those that hate and they just turn on each other. I I remember um uh some of our church members who in the public uh domain, let their convictions about marriage be known, that they believed in biblical marriage and biblical morality, and then there was this host of the folks who have decided to give themselves over to various lusts and pleasures, who went on social media to try to destroy our church members who made those public statements. It was very interesting that as I looked at their comments, it wasn't just two or three days, they were biting and devouring one another, just all over one another. They weren't just against the Christian, they were against each other. This thing of hating and hatefulness is very common among those groups. They turn on each other and devour one another.

Galatians 5:13 through 16 says, "For you were called to freedom, brethren; but do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." Be different than hating and hateful, be loving and serving one another. "For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourselves.' But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another." In other words, we're not marked anymore by those who walk in a purpose to have malice and and hating and hateful spirits one toward another. That is contrary to who we are now. That is contrary to our purpose and our pattern in life.

Now, where do we see, by the way, looking at this verse, go ahead to verse 4, if you will. We have those seven things listed, this all-inclusive enslavement, this vile and ugly condition that marks mankind before we're converted. And then we have verse 4, a

glorious conjunction, "But, but when the the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us." So here we are in this all-inclusive, enslaved, vile and ugly condition before a holy God and if I could just pause right there as a side note, the reason you don't think you're bad is because you don't know the holiness of God. You see, we have a a common plague in evangelicalism and in Baptist life today that tries to bring God down so that we can all relate to him better and and understand him better. You can't relate to God. He's holy. You can't understand God. He's holy. You just honor God and bow to God and be in awe of God and hallow God. You start getting a grasp of who this God is, you'll start getting a glimpse of who you are.

So this all-inclusive enslavement, this ugly and vile condition, and then you get to Titus 3 verse 4, but God did something. Now that just immediately took my mind to another text. Where is another text of Scripture that almost perfectly parallels the flow of this verse text of Scripture? It's Ephesians 2. Ephesians 2, 1 through 3. I don't know if that'll be on your screen, but we can turn to it. Would you turn there to it? Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 through 3, same basic principles laid out here. As Paul writes to the church at Ephesus, Ephesians 2, beginning in verse 1, well, make sure you turn there, because I may call on you to read in just a second. Ephesians 2, verse 1, "And you were," you could say you being "dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." So Paul writing to the Ephesians said, "By the way, before you were converted, you were dead, you were deviant, you were demonized, you were disobedient, you were deranged, and you were damned." Then verse 4, we got that conjunction again, just like over in Titus, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." Same perfect parallel there that we see in Titus.

So let's get to that conjunction a little bit. Let's get to uh the glorious beauty back in Titus chapter 3 and we'll go to our our next main point and that is the emancipation we now enjoy. There's an enslavement we all inclusively knew, now an emancipation has come that every child of God gloriously and wondrously enjoys. And I've unpacked it with three subpoints here. A, because he is the saving God. Notice how he words it there, "But when the kindness of," here's the phrase, "God our Savior." God our Savior. You see, the saving God, as some of the scholars point out, that that's a good way to to transfer this into the English, he's the saving God. You see, that's the kind of God he is. We love, we we treasure, we honor, and we serve this God who is the saving God. There's no other God like this. Well, there's no other God. We can say like the Scripture, there's no other so-called God like this. John 12:17 reminds us, Jesus speaking, "If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world." Jesus is not speaking here in an ultimate and absolute sense. Of course, all judgment has been given to Jesus, but he's saying, "In My first coming particularly, My purpose is saving." And by the way, he's coming again and there'll be no saving. You're gonna be saved, you gotta get saved now. I mean now. Look to Jesus now.

Now what's so good is that we are not somehow to save ourselves according to the dictates of this God. No, the phrase means he appeared in order to save us. Jesus did not appear to install a new set of rules and regulations whereby we can now be saved. No, he came to save us. Being enslaved to lust in various pleasures, verse 3. We could not participate in our salvation. Being dead, Ephesians 2:1. We could not give ourselves new life. We could not do the things necessary to save ourselves. I mean, for example, when he says you're dead in trespasses and sins, I've told you this before, I always think about Jimmy Millican, my theology professor in graduate school. And he would turn us over to Ephesians 1 where it says we're dead in our trespasses and sins, and Dr. Seeley would say, "How dead were you? How dead is dead?" I can tell you how dead it is. I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll load up together at the church and we'll go down to Morrison's Funeral Home, or whichever one you work at, I want you to get advertisement to, and we'll go to every corpse we can find in there and see if we can get a dead man to do anything. You know, no matter how much you plead with them, no matter how much you exhort them, no matter how much you cry out to them, they're dead and they cannot regenerate themselves. They cannot repent. They cannot turn from sin. They cannot believe on Christ. Actually, they can do nothing. That's why the text is so precious when it says that God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. He came as the saving God to do all that was necessary to secure the children. What a glorious thing this is.

So while we're enslaved to sin and lust, while we are dead and unable to perform any type of work or requirement, in that condition, the saving God appeared. That's what he says in Titus 3:4. He appeared, he's come on the scene. He did not appear to learn our condition. He knows our condition. He did not appear to learn our condition and then decided to save us. No, he appeared in order to save us and he knew what it would take. He did not appear to become our saving God, he's always been the saving God. He appeared to secure our salvation. He came determined to save us and as he performed the task, he being God performed the task perfectly. So you, you who were all inclusively a part of those who were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lust and pleasures, spending your life in malice and in envy, hateful, hating one another, he came to make sure even you would be saved. That's what he's telling these folks.

I couldn't help but go to some of the statements of Jesus and just intertwine those in here. John 6:37, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." Notice the thing that precipitates all of being saved is you're one of those whom the Father has given to Jesus, and all those who the Father has given to Jesus, they come to Jesus. Jesus said, "My sheep will hear My voice." To some of you in here this morning, you haven't heard his voice. I don't know if it is or not, but it might be because you're not his sheep. "And all that come to Me," Jesus says, "I certainly will not cast them out."

John 17:4, talking to his heavenly Father, heavenly Jesus said, "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished," I did it, I finished it, "the work which You have given Me to do." What was the work he gave him to do? Secure the children, bring all the children

home. John 17:12, "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition," that's Judas Iscariot, "so that the Scripture would be fulfilled." And then John 17:24, here's Jesus' request of the Father. "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

So here we have this glorious emancipation because he came and he's the saving God. He's the saving God, God our Savior. Secondly, not only because he's the saving God, but the text points out because he's kind. Because he's kind. The first part of verse 4, "But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared." Kindness is the idea of goodness in action. He's the God who has innate goodness, but he doesn't just have goodness, he acts in goodness toward us.

Now, his goodness did not require him to act toward us this way. In fact, his holy justice compelled him to act toward us in judgment, but in the kindness of his grace, he has chosen to act toward us in goodness. This is something we do not deserve. Romans 2:4 reminds us that it's the goodness of God that leads us to repentance. So if God showed kindness to us, where's Paul coming with all of this? His point is, you ought now to show kindness to others who don't deserve it. You ought to be engaged in good deeds if God's done all of this kind and good thing good things for you.

Well, thirdly, not only is he the saving God and not only because he's kind, but also because he's loving we've been emancipated from this bondage of sin and this eternal loss. He very clearly just says in verse 4, "and His love for mankind appeared." You know, God is the only being that can hate righteously. I'll say that again, God is the only being that can hate righteously. We've all heard the phrase, and I I get where you're coming from if you use the phrase, but it's not really biblically balanced, and that is that God hates the sin but loves the sinner. Well, God doesn't send sin to hell, he sends sinners to hell. Romans, or Psalm 5:5, "The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity." Righteous hatred. Psalm 11:5, "The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked, And the one who loves violence His soul hates." Malachi 1:2 and 3, "'I have loved you,' says the LORD. But you say, 'How have You loved us?' 'Was not Esau Jacob's brother?' declares the LORD. 'Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.'"

God is the only being that can hate righteously, but his hatred is not hateful. It is holy and it is right. It's not based on some sinful or lacking character or view virtue from his heart. Yet, the point is that I'm making that he loves us, yet in Christ, he's cast love toward us that he could, if he chose, righteously hate. What's Paul's point? If God did all this for us, all this good, then child of God, you should do good to others. You should be engaged in good deeds. So let's go to III, and that's what we'll talk about, the excellence of conduct we must now perform. He said, based on all of this, and there's a whole lot more here we'll look at next time, but based on all of this glorious truth, now there ought to be an excellent conduct that begins to flow out of us toward others.

Look down to verse 8 as verse 8 gives you the main point Paul's getting to. "This is a trustworthy statement." What statement? All the statement about our sin and our need and our death uh before God, our spiritual death, you will, all our lust and and to pleasures and enslavement and malice and hating, etc., and God being the saving God of kindness and love, which we did not deserve, that all being a trustworthy statement down in verse 8, "and concerning these things, I want you to speak confidently so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds." That's where he's going. "I want you to do good deeds. I want you to live right." Because of the fact that he's the saving God and he's chosen to cast toward us his kindness and love, we no longer should fail to honor civic authorities, verse 1. We no longer should fail to obey our civic authorities, verse 1. We should no longer neglect to do good deeds, verse 1. Verse 2, instead of acting foolishly, we should act should act righteously and wisely and love and honor God. We're no longer to be disobedient like we once were, verse 2. We're no longer to still act deceived and dragged around like a a hog with a ring in their nose to lust and and various enslavements of of God's ungodly pleasures. Instead of participating in malice, we should have to have good motives toward men. Instead of participating in evil, we should not be jealous and want what other people have. Instead of having hate and hateful behavior, we should have love and good behavior toward others. Verse 8, we should be careful to now engage in good deeds. That's where he's coming to.

It really boils down to, I have I have this right here, I have these two pages of conclusions for practical application but um, if I took the time to do these two pages, some of you might have malice toward me because it's going to take a while, and you might have bad thoughts toward me and you can't do that because you have to be engaged in good deeds. I don't want to be a temptation to you.

Now, as a young Christian, when I would come across things like that, honestly, I thought I've got to go out in this world and all 75,000 members of Harbert and Lauderdale County, I've got to do every good deed for every one of them if I know of anything they might possibly need, whether a kitty cat needs food or whatever it is. I just ever, and and I didn't get, if there's a reason why God told fathers, if you don't take care of your own household, you're worse than an infidel because your primary concern is your own household. And then out from that, do good to all men, Galatians 6:10, but especially to those of the household of the faith, your local church family. And when you get it down like that, and if your elders have done a pretty good job of organizing you into small groups so that you're not worrying about all thousand church members, but you know, six or 12 or 15, then that's doable, amen? So start there, Galatians 6:10, especially the household of the faith, and then as you're able, do good deeds to all men.

But here's the bottom line question: if all this is true of who you are, the path and pattern you were on and what you were headed toward in your sins, and God appeared as the saving God, the God of kindness and the God of love, and has transformed you and cleansed you and made you his child forever, what's your excuse for not being actively engaged in good deeds? Actually, the phrase there in verse 8 is be careful. Careful means to contemplate it. Put some energy into the next good deed you could do for someone in

your family, in your small group, in your church family, and then even the community. Put some effort into thinking on doing a good deed and then engaged is the idea of have a plan. God did not sit up in heaven and sit on his throne and say, "I am God, I am kind, I am loving, I do good deeds, but I think I'll just sit here for a few thousand years." No, the Bible says when the saving God, the God of kindness and the God of love appeared, he had a plan and did good for us. Paul's point is all of us should think on and have a plan for how we're gonna serve our brothers and sisters in Christ, primarily, not exclusively, and others as we can being engaged in good deeds.

Why don't we start with just faithful church attendance? That's a good place to start. Do you know there's a junior boy or a junior girl here that's watching you. You don't even, you have no idea. For some reason, you've caught their eye. They're watching you. And when you're not here half the time, they want to know, "Why aren't they here half the time? Is God not important? Is it not significant enough the things of God to be faithful?" See what I'm saying? It's powerful stuff. Think about it, be careful, engaged, make a plan, and do good deeds.