

Title: Gospel grease
Text: Titus 3.1-8
Theme: How the gospel bears fruit
Series: Titus
Prop Stmt: Gospel grease is the lubricant that softens the edges of our lives so that as we live without friction God's grace and mercy is set on display.

Read Text:

It's football season. The other day the two boys who live next door to me were playing football and were doing what so many boys love to do, they were dreaming. Here's a close proximity to what I heard. "Anderson drops back to pass...he's looking, looking, looking and spots McMann, he throws it deep, McMann catches it on the run, he's at the 20, the 15, the 10, the 5, he scores and the owls win the game. The fans are going wild."

We dream about making the big play, being the hero, winning the game, getting soaked with Gatorade, winning the trophy and basking in glory. What we don't dream about is all of the ordinary, mundane, work, drills, daily practices, disciplines and habits that go into being a football player. And yet, without the ordinary disciplines of football practice, there is no big play that wins it all because you never get out on the field.

Well, the same thing is true about life. Most of life is very ordinary and daily. We go to work, we buy groceries, we change diapers, we make meals, we wash clothes, we dust, we vacuum, we pay bills, we load the dishwasher, we cut the grass, we take out the trash, and all the while, there's no announcer broadcasting our moves with amazement. There's no slow-motion replay of us pumping gas in our van or picking up our kids from school.

Life seems so very ordinary and we wonder, is this it? We are tempted to look for amazing, awesome, wow kind of events in order to give our life meaning. And churches get caught up in trying to oversell themselves with hype as well. "Prepare to be amazed." "Authentic worship!" But, the truth is, life and church life, for the most part is ordinary. If you haven't already figured it out, this isn't going to be the most amazing sermon you have ever heard. I hope it isn't the worst one, but honestly it is probably going to be rather ordinary. And I am fine with that because our text calls us to live in a way that on the surface seems, well, sort of ordinary, doesn't it? When you look at the things that Titus is supposed to remind the believers in the churches of Crete to do, there is nothing that sounds all that amazing.

However, if you know someone who lives like this then you know that it is rather amazing, isn't it? That is what the gospel can do. It can take ordinary lives and do extraordinary things through them even in the midst of daily living. I really hope that you see this. Several things to note as you look at this text:

- 1) The linking words: Remind, For, But, so that, so that
- 2) The actions: what we are to do, what God has done (notice that what we are to do is in response to what God has done)

- 3) The doctrines: the incarnation, Salvation, the character of God (goodness, loving kindness, mercy) the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, justification by grace, heirs with Christ, eternal life
- 4) The saying is trustworthy

So, here is how the text lays out for us. Verses 1-2 tell us how we are to treat others. Verses 3-7 tell us why we are to treat others that way with the point being God was merciful, kind, patient and gracious with you, so you can be that way towards others. And then in verse 8, the first point is emphasized and repeated. So in verse 1 Titus is to remind believers of these things and in verse 8 he is to insist on these things, so obviously, this is important. Let's jump in.

I. HOW you are to treat others. (1-2)

Titus is challenged by Paul to remind his hearers to live this way. The word "remind" is a present active imperative. That means that Titus to being commanded to do this and to keep on doing this and to never stop doing this. They needed to be reminded. You need to be reminded. Every believer you know needs to be reminded because we forget. We tend to go back to what we were and we need to be challenged, corrected and held in place.

Some of you have had braces on your teeth. But after wearing that hardware for awhile you still have to wear a retainer because your teeth, left alone will tend toward going back to their original position. The same thing is true about our sinful natures. We have no idea of how deep the ruts of self-centeredness run in our lives. We do not have to be reminded to think about ourselves, or prefer ourselves do we? Have you ever gone an entire morning without praying? If you ever do, you do because your mind is already full of yourself. And when you are full of yourself, you are probably not a whole lot of fun to be around. We need this reminder all the time, like a retainer for our mind to keep us thinking right.

The other thing to note is how this command to remind reflects a realistic understanding of our weaknesses. Instead of saying, "I told you once and I'm not telling you again." The tone of our relationships with one another is to be one of encouraging and helpful. We need to be reminded of these things. As we will see, the gospel is not only how we are rightly related to God, but our relationship to God sets the pace for our relationship with others. Therefore, the gospel is designed by God to be the grease that reduces the natural friction of people rubbing each other the wrong way. The fruit of the gospel will be seen in ordinary life. So, how are we to treat others?

Submissive to rulers and authorities
Obedient
Ready for every good work
Speak evil of no one
Avoid quarreling
Be gentle
Show perfect courtesy toward all people

We could summarize all of this by saying, live with honest to God, humility. We live in such an angry world. It feels like everybody is angry about something. People drive angry, talk angry, send angry messages on social media, etc. But look at how are called to live. Be submissive to rulers and authorities. That is speaking directly of the government. Is our government perfect? No, but don't forget that Paul lived under Nero. We will never have a government we can trust until Christ sets up his kingdom. But, the fact that we are ruled by flawed people does not give us the right to be angry. Obedient. Instead of living with a "who says" default response, we are called to live with an attitude of obedience. Some of you live with the lava of life always close to the surface. It only takes one little poke and you explode. You live uptight. You live thinking that everyone is out to get you; that you have to prove something, etc. There is very little calm, rest in your life because your life is not marked by humility or surrender.

Now, all of you students who started school this week, you have a perfect opportunity to live this out. What happened this week? "I can't believe we are back in school. I hate this class, I hate this teacher, I hate this school, I hate this homework, I can't believe I have this schedule, I hate where my locker is, etc. That is the soundtrack of life at school isn't it? And it is not unique to school; it shows up at work as well. What happens when management announces a new program or a new idea at work?

The idea of being ready for every good work means that you are ready to help. You live looking for how you can help others. Ask your spouse this: What can I do to help you out right now? Ask your parents that? What can I do to help you out right now? Ask your co-workers? Is there anything I can do to help you out right now?

Speak evil of no one. Paul is not saying that we are to be naïve nor that we ought to correctly evaluate what someone may be doing, but he is urging us to restrain from the natural human tendency to assume the worst about people. The truth is, there are evil people in this world and they need you to pray for them.

Avoid quarrelling and being gentle go together. Don't quarrel, instead be gentle. In fact, show perfect courtesy toward all people.

In every one of these admonitions, we are called to humble ourselves and consider others to be more important than ourselves and serve them. We are not being asked to fix world hunger, cure cancer and rid the world of injustice. We are called to do something that is even more impossible and daunting and that is live with a consistent view of considering others as being more important than ourselves. But, Paul does not give us this list as behaviors to check off, we are called to live like this for a reason. That reason is not only explained in verses 3-7, but the reason for living like this, is the empowerment to do it.

2. WHY you are to live that way. (3-7)

The big idea of verses 3-7 is this: Look at how God has treated you! This is so good, isn't it? There are many times when you are tempted to think that you woke up and found

yourself in the middle of an idiot's club, right? What is going on, this is crazy! Is this really my life? And when we think that way, we get attitude and think that we are different, that we are intrinsically better. And we aren't. If you are a follower of Christ look at what you used to be. We used to be:

Foolish - What is a fool? The bible describes a fool as someone who does things without giving proper consideration to the consequences. That is what we used to be. We used to live in such a way that we were going to hell because we had not yet trusted in Christ and we were attempting to go it on our own.

Disobedient - Every single one of us lived our lives marked by wanting to make our own rules and live in rebellion to whatever authority God placed over us.

Led astray - Sin deceives us and not only takes us to dark and lonely places but it enslaves us.

Slaves to various passions and pleasures - You do not have to be addicted to alcohol, heroin, marijuana, prescription drugs or porn to be a slave to various passions and pleasures. You can be a video game junky, a sports addict, a shopaholic, a workaholic or a food addict to qualify as well. You can be addicted to (that is controlled by) perfection, which is a cruel master, because you will never be perfect and you will never make your world perfect and there will always be someone (including you) who will mess up your world. Anything that you run to for comfort or consolation apart from Christ will end up owning you and it will not be a kind master. The result will be a wasting your life.

Passing our days (wasting our lives) in malice and envy - All of this stuff leads to malice and envy because all of the bondages of this world made you promises that they never kept and you look like and feel like a fool. You are hated by others and you end up hating others.

This is our story. This is our testimony. This is what we all are apart from Christ. It is not pretty. There is nothing to brag about. Our lives apart from Christ are empty and vain, unsatisfied and insecure.

But something happened (v.4)! That "something" is described in v.5 as this: "he saved us." God saved us (meaning we did not save ourselves) from sin. God saved us. This ought to be very clear to you. Salvation from our rebellion was not our idea. We didn't come up with this. We didn't think of this. And what we read in these verses is a wonderful description of the gospel which tells us what was the motive behind our salvation, what God did in history for our salvation, what God did to us to ensure our salvation, and what is the result of our salvation.

God devised a plan to rescue you from your rebellion, your folly, your insecurity, your emptiness and from wasting your life in bondage and quite frankly, from hell. Why would God devise a plan to rescue you? Because God is good and is full of loving kindness. How do I know that God can be trusted? Look at the cross. V. 4 says, "But

when the goodness and loving kindness of God OUR SAVIOR appeared” meaning the goodness and loving kindness of God was set on display for you to see when God in Christ showed up on this earth. God did this. God showed up in a human body. He did this because he is good. He did this because he loves. He did this because he is kind. And it was because God showed up in history in a human body (incarnation) and lived the life that you could not live and died the death that you could not die, that you can be saved from the penalty of your sin. He saved us. He did the work.

Please notice v.5. This is one of the most important truths for you to ever get settled in your mind and heart. God is not good and loving because you are good and loving. God did not save you because you tried real hard. God did not help you because you helped yourself. God did not see you doing your best and rewarded your efforts with a final push of goodness to get you over the top. Oh no! We are not saved by anything that we have done. We have no works of righteousness. There is nothing that we can do that counts. We have nothing to boast about. We have nothing to offer God that holds any weight at all. We’ve got nothing. God did the saving and God did all of the saving. We did not contribute one iota toward our salvation. God does not love us because we are loveable. God loved us in spite of the foulness of our sin and in spite of the madness of all our insecurities. And he did not leave our salvation to chance. God not only accomplished the means of our salvation through Christ, but God applies salvation to us through the Spirit.

Look at what else God did. He sent the Spirit to wash us through regeneration. What is that? Regeneration is the act of the Spirit of God whereby he breathes spiritual life into a person who was spiritually dead. This is what Jesus was telling Nicodemus in John 3 when Nicodemus was asking how he could be born again. Jesus said, you can’t, but the Spirit can. You have to be born again in order to get into the kingdom of God, but you cannot do it on your own. But, this is what the Spirit does. The Spirit breathes life (regeneration) into you and the result is, your spiritual eyes are opened and you have faith to believe. God is so committed to your salvation that he ensures that it is covered from beginning to end. He gives you the faith to believe, so that you believe in Christ. You are not born again because you believe, you believe because you are born again. He saved us. When you believe, you are saved, you are cleansed, you are forgiven, you are declared righteous, you are adopted, and you are placed into the family of God. You are his!

Look at v.7, Paul summarizes what happens to you when you come to faith in Christ by saying “so that being justified by his grace...” Wow! What a glorious truth. Justification is NOT being made righteous because you do good things! No, no, no! Justification is the legal declaration of God that you are righteous because your sin has been applied to Christ and the righteousness of Christ has been applied to you. Stop there for a minute.

Your sin is serious. Go back and look at v.3. All of that was placed on Christ. All of your rebellion was put on Christ’s record. Christ took on your criminal history, your moral failures, your rebellion as if he committed everyone of your sins. Christ died a terrible death and suffered unspeakable punishment because he was treated as if he was guilty of everyone of your sins. Christ took all your punishment. There is nothing left for you to be punished for. But that is only half of the story. Christ lived a perfectly righteous life.

Christ lived in such a way that the Father was infinitely pleased with his Son and rejoiced in him. The Father reveled in the perfect faith and obedience of his Son. When you trust in Christ, not only is your sin removed from you and credited to Christ, but, you are credited with the righteousness of Christ. He takes what you have done and gives you what He has done. His record is now your record. So, when the Father looks at you he pulls out the record of his Son and he is thrilled. That is what justification means. And it is by grace. What made you different? What made you special? What can you claim? Nothing! God has given you what you do not deserve. But don't stop there; look ahead.

What you are saved to (an heir) sets the pace for your life. The one who has adopted you and placed you in the will calls you to live in view of that inheritance. If, God loved you, died for you and rescued you when you were a repulsive rebel, then you can be kind, thoughtful, and considerate of others. In fact when you realize that all that you have is because of the kindness of God, then you can live with kindness toward others. We do not attempt to be kind to gain God's favor; we have received God's kindness and seek to reflect that by being kind in order to point others to him. That is the summary of this.

3. HOW (again) you are to live. (8)

“The saying is trustworthy” – a phrase that draws attention to what he has just said (about the gospel) because he is now going to go back and basically do what he told Titus to do. He is going to remind us to live in a way that reflects the gospel. He wants Titus to keep preaching the gospel “so that” (purpose clause) those who have believed in God may be careful, that is may be intentional to devote themselves to good works.

Now, let's say that you are a Detroit Lions fan. You have jersey (\$175), a flag, a hat, and you have your DVR set in case I preach too long today. You are devoted. You give attention to the Detroit Lions. You set aside time to watch them, read about them, discuss them and you give your affections, attention and interest to them. What do you get in return? I'm just asking, not that there is a particularly good answer to that question, but think of this. If you are a Detroit Lions fan, you understand the word devotion. You are committed to something.

As a follower of Christ devote yourself to good works. Intentionally plan to do good for others because of the calling of Christ on your life. This is excellent and profitable. This is devotion that is worth it!

Beloved, look around you. Hurricane Harvey just made a colossal mess of Houston. Irma is significantly larger. Fires are raging in the west and a major earthquake hit Mexico a couple of days ago. North Korea keeps threatening to launch nuclear warheads our way. There are many opportunities for fear. Social media allows us to share one tragic scenario after another. Fear is an effective unifier for a moment, and when we see people coming together out of fear, we are glad for people coming together. But what we have in Christ is so much deeper and greater than fear. We have this confident, resolute, unshakeable and unending hope in Christ. We devote ourselves to good works not in order to feel good about ourselves or to look good in front of others. We devote ourselves to good

works because it is excellent. It puts the glory of Christ on display. It is profitable. It is a reflection of the gospel. And Christ and the gospel give people a rock to stand on and a fortress to be guarded by. Rest your heart and mind in Christ, but get your body in gear and devote yourself to good works. What can you do to serve someone today? Start by asking.