

Main Idea: When we are allowing our light to shine before people, there will be eight visible evidences of it, according to Titus 3. That they may see your good works, said Jesus. This is what they will see, says Paul in Titus 3. We looked at the first three last time, and will focus on the final five today.

I. We must demonstrate proper attitudes and actions towards government authorities (1).

II. We must be known in the community for being people who use our tongues to promote peace, are considerate, and humble (2).

III. We must live in the grip of grace, never forgetting that the reason we are different is because of what God has done, not what we have done (3-7).

IV. We must be known for doing good in our community (8).

V. We must refuse to allow petty issues to distract us from our mission (9).

VI. We must practice church discipline when necessary (10-11).

VII. We must be generous in helping Christian workers who have needs (13).

VIII. We must be known as being productive, hard workers (14).

The bottom line: The reputation of a church results from the reputation of its people.

1. Is my life helping our church’s reputation in the community?
2. What good work can I do for the glory of God this week?

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 2:9-12

Finish this sentence. When the light is shining...

So many things are true when the light is shining. When the light is shining there is communication. Think of Paul Revere’s “one if by land, two if by sea.”

When the light is shining, there is a way out. Think of a light at the end of the tunnel.

There is visibility. When the light is shining, you see things you could not see previously.

There is health. Think of what the absence of light produces under your kitchen sink, moldy potatoes, just for starters.

When the light is shining it means the donuts are warm and ready. Think of Krispy Kreme.

It means there is safety. Ever tried to jog on a dark road?

It means there is potential for growth. Think of science class and photosynthesis. Think of seeds germinating and plants coming out of the soil.

When the light is shining there is opportunity to accomplish things. Kind of tough to read a book in the dark, but when the light is shining that changes.

When the light is shining, you can see things. Others can see things. The unclear is made clear. The unseen becomes seeable. Things are different when the light is shining.

I am the light of the world, said Jesus. And to those who receive Him as Savior, to those whose lives He enters, He says, *You are the light of the world*. This is our identity. And then He tells us, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven*.

Jesus said that when our light is shining, others will see it. Specifically, they will see our good works. So the world is supposed to see us, which means two options are unacceptable. One, *unite and fight*. If we do that, they won’t see our good works but only our fighting, and won’t glorify our Father in heaven. Two, *retreat and moan*. If we do that, if we isolate and insulate ourselves, they certainly won’t see us, let alone our good works. And our Father will not receive the glory He deserves from them, or us.

** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

² For a previous look at this passage, see WBC 4/2/2006.

Jesus' first followers gave serious attention to Jesus' exhortation. We know that because of how much ink the NT devotes to this theme of light. Throughout the epistles we're given explanations and exhortations regarding light. Here's a sampling of the insights and what could easily be an eight or ten part series!

- Put on the armor of light. Romans 13:12
- Let the light shine. 2 Corinthians 4:6
- Beware of the angel of light. 2 Corinthians 11:14
- You are light in the Lord. Ephesians 5:8
- You are sons of the light. 1 Thessalonians 5:5
- Called out of darkness into light. 1 Peter 2:9
- A light shining in a dark place: the Word of God. 2 Peter 1:19
- Walking in the light. 1 John 1:5-9
- A light for the Gentiles: our missionary assignment. Acts 13:47
- Men love darkness rather than light. John 3:19

But today we're trying to answer the question, "What good works should they see?" And so we're returning to Titus 3, where we see the repetition of the words "good works" (in the ESV), three times in this chapter.

Verse 1 "Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every **good work**..."

Verse 8 "The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to **good works**. These things are excellent and profitable for people."

Verse 14 "And let our people learn to devote themselves to **good works**, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful."

So when we let our light shine, people will see our good works, says Jesus. And Paul applies that exhortation, showing us with clarity what these good works are to be.

When we are allowing our light to shine before people, there will be eight visible evidences of it, according to Titus 3. That they may see your good works, said Jesus. This is what they will see, says Paul in Titus 3. We looked at the first three last time, and will focus on the final five today.

Paul was a specialist in the field of local church health-care. Paul worked with "sick" churches, such as Corinth with its divisions, Galatia with its legalism, and Colosse with its gnostic mysticism. But Paul also did "pediatric" work, that is, he worked with infant churches, and sought to guide them through the growing pains of infancy, youth, and into maturity. Such was the case with the churches on the island of Crete.

What does it take to have a healthy church whose light shines as it ought in a community? Dr. Paul answered that question for his associate Titus in the epistle that bears his name.

Paul states his purpose for Titus' ministry in Titus 1:5, "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished..." Left to themselves, things deteriorate rather than getting better. Likewise, healthy, light-bearing churches don't just happen.

Titus was to set things in order in three primary areas in the church: Set things in order in the leadership (chapter one), in the congregation (chapter two), and in the church's reputation in the community (chapter three). So if we are going to be a healthy church whose light is shining, the same goes for us:

Chapter One: The Church must have *Godly Leadership*.

Chapter Two: The Church must have a *Godly Congregation*.

Chapter Three: The Church must have a *Godly Reputation* in the community.

Today, we're continuing to explore the third area. In Titus 3 Paul identifies eight evidences that a church's light is shining in a community. We looked at the first three last time, and after a brief review we'll consider the final five evidences this morning.

I. We must demonstrate proper attitudes and actions towards government authorities (1).

In verse 1 Paul states, "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good..." We learned that as Christians, we have civil responsibilities we must fulfill if we are to have a God-honoring reputation in the world. Our responsibilities are threefold.

First, we must submit to government authorities. We are to accept and support the leadership of our civil rulers. As God's people we ought to be model citizens. Secondly, we are to "be obedient" which means we obey civil laws. We ought to have a reputation for being law-keepers. We don't operate by the principle, "What can I get away with without getting caught?" Or to put it another way, I highly doubt that Paul had a radar detector in his chariot. Thirdly, we are to "be ready to do whatever is good." We are to have a passion for doing good. We are to be a people who are on the lookout for opportunities to do good and in so doing bring attention to our Savior. We see this truth emphasized again in the second characteristic...

II. We must be known in the community for being people who use our tongues to promote peace, are considerate, and humble (2).

Verse 2—"To slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men." God's standard is high. We are to show true (lit. 'all') humility to *all* men. The only way that will ever be true in our lives is if we have been gripped by grace, as explained in verses 3-7, from which we get the third characteristic...

III. We must live in the grip of grace, never forgetting that the reason we are different is because of what God has done, not what we have done (3-7).

He saved us. We didn't save ourselves, and in fact, both *could not* and *would not*. That's the thrust of verses 3-7. When we were far from God, enslaved to our sinful passions, doomed to destruction, *God saved us*. He took the initiative. He did the work. He did it, not because we deserved it, but because of His grace.

People that have a healthy reputation in a community are people who remember their indebtedness to grace. He saved us, and what He did for us He can do for anyone. Indeed, that is our desire, to see Him do for others what He has done for us—and we want to participate in that good work.

Now we're ready to break new ground and discover what else is true of a healthy church. Beginning in verse 8 we find five additional characteristics of a church that has a godly reputation in a community.

IV. We must be known for doing good in our community (8).

Verse 8 begins, "This is a trustworthy [KJV 'faithful'] saying." Literally, it reads, "faithful is the word." Paul wanted to sum it all up for Titus. His brief letter is nearly completed. He reminds his friend, "Titus, the things I have told you (particularly what he just wrote in the first verses of chapter three as directed by the Holy Spirit) are faithful. You can depend on them. They are trustworthy."

Here's what Titus was to do with what he learned, “And I want you to stress these things.” The KJV states, “And these things I will that you affirm constantly.” Give special emphasis to practical teaching about the grace of God, Titus. Insist on grace-living, Titus. Speak confidently about grace, Titus. Help the church to have a big view of God and what He has done for us.

Unfortunately, many churches devote very little time and attention to teaching about God. They're big on man, but small on God. There's lots of focus on man's needs, but comparatively little focus on God's greatness.

Several years ago John Piper, pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, raised a provocative question in a lecture at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School:³

“In the last twenty years or so there's been a phenomenal explosion of worship singing that is good—Jack Hayford's 'Majesty,' Graham Kendrick's 'Shine, Jesus, Shine,' and hundreds of worship songs that if I were to start singing, you could all finish...

One thing is unmistakable as a trend in these songs: by and large, they are Godward. They are addressed directly to God—not sung about God but to God.

I find that preaching is moving in exactly the opposite direction. While the worship songs have moved Godward, preaching has moved manward. While worship songs focus our attention again and again on the character of God, preaching focuses again and again on contemporary issues, personal problems, relationships.

My question is why.”

A healthy church is a church that helps its people focus on God, not on themselves. The truth is, having a proper view of God will have very practical effects on us. What is the outcome of practical, solid teaching of doctrine? We find out in verse 8.

“...so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.” Churches are supposed to teach their membership to devote themselves to doing what is good.

Paul has a lot to say about *good works* in Titus. In 1:16 he warned about people who profess to know God but who are “unfit for doing anything good.” In 2:3 Titus was told to teach the older women to “teach what is good.” In 2:7 he himself was to “set them an example by doing what is good.” In 2:14 we learn that the purpose of Jesus' redemptive work was to secure a people who are “eager to do what is good.” The book ends with this emphasis in 3:14, “Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good.”

The point is this. Although Christians are not saved by their works, good works do matter. We are saved unto good works (Eph 2:10). And if a church is to have a good reputation in a community, Christians must be known for doing good in that community.

Do you enjoy being around sick people? Think of the last time you had sickness in your home. Sickness is not very attractive, nor appealing.

Sick churches don't have a very appealing reputation in a community. Healthy churches do. Churches full of people who are committed to doing good are attractive and commendable.

E.g.—

³ In *Leadership*, Spring 96, p. 11.

In verse 9 we discover the fifth trait we must exhibit if we're to portray a God-honoring reputation in our community.

V. We must refuse to allow petty issues to distract us from our mission (9).

Verse 9 exhorts, "But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless." Far too many Christians major on minor issues and minor on the major issues. Christianity is far more than wearing certain clothing styles, or listening to particular music styles, but for many, these are major issues. They become the standard for fellowship and the basis for separation. But they are minor issues.

How do I know? Because of Titus 3. Paul just told us in verses 3-7 what the major issues are: holy living (3), grace living (4), Christ-centered living (5-6), living that matters in the light of eternity (7), and being people who constantly do what is good (8).

Commentator William Hendriksen made this observation, "In every age there are people who love to indulge in strange mixtures of truth and error. They carry on lengthy debates about dates and definitions. They engage in hair-splitting disputes. They pile myth upon myth, fable upon fable, and the end is never in sight. And so they make the law of God void by human tradition."

Now consider verse 9 again. We're commanded to avoid some things. What? Paul mentions four things, "Avoid **foolish controversies** and **genealogies** and **arguments** and **quarrels** about the law." We're given a clue about these teachers back in Titus 1:14, where Paul exhorted Titus, "...and pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth."

Not everybody who *talks about* the Bible truly *believes* the Bible. Some people love to talk about Bible trivia—and they do a lot of talking—doing so to avoid having to deal with the main message of the Bible.

The message of the Bible is quite basic and uncontroversial. *God is forming a people for Himself*. God (the holy Creator who made the universe) is forming (He has a plan which He designed in eternity past and is carrying out in the present, a plan to rescue sinners) a people (God is forming a people, a new people, made up of folks who used to be condemned rebels but who are now His children, based on the redemptive work His Son accomplished by dying on the cross and conquering the grave) for Himself (the purpose of God's plan is to bring honor to Himself in the lives of the people He has rescued and adopted). Every part of the Bible supports this main idea. Why did God chose the nation of Israel? To accomplish this plan. Why is teaching about the family in important? Because it relates to this plan. What's the church all about? It's connected to this plan. The parts relate to the whole.

But some people get enamored with the parts. Period. They want to talk and talk and talk about biblical truths, not so God's agenda will be accomplished in their lives, but for some other, typically self-promoting reason. Such people can be tough to deal with, after all they sound so spiritual as they quote Bible verse after verse. But in essence, they're merely using the Bible to undermine the intent of the Bible, and the result is controversy.

You say, "What does this have to do with being ready to do evangelism?" The answer is quite simple. Churches that chase controversies do not have good reputations in their communities. Why not? Because foolish controversies don't produce godly lives, but rather are "unprofitable" (the word means "not advantageous," there's no advantage to it) and "useless" (the word means "futile, worthless, empty, fruitless").

Notice the contrast. In verses 3-7 Paul told Titus to emphasize the things he taught, sound doctrine that produces good works. Why? Because these things are “excellent and profitable” (8). In verse 9 he told him to avoid foolish controversies. Why? Because they are “unprofitable.”

By the way, Paul didn't say to avoid controversy, but *foolish* controversy. Teaching God's truth in a pagan world is controversial, and we're not to win the lost by removing the offense of the gospel. In our world, teaching that man is depraved is controversial since the modern notion is that man has a spark of divinity in him. Teaching that no man comes to God except through faith in Jesus Christ is controversial in a pluralistic society. Teaching that hell is a real place where people who did not know Christ will spend eternity is quite controversial to modern-thinkers who want to hear only “positive” ideas. So do we avoid teaching these truths because they are controversial? Certainly not.

The point of verse 9 is this. We're to avoid putting major emphasis on areas where the Scriptures are silent. Major on the majors as defined by the Scriptures.

I receive information in the mail constantly from Christian organizations who are promoting their “issues” and want others to join their cause. Some of the issues are legitimate, but do you know what goes through my mind? I wrestle with a tension. Our church doesn't have the time or the energy to devote our focus to the essentials of evangelism and discipleship AND to get involved in these “issues.” It grieves my heart to see churches floundering because the leadership is chasing issues. And quite frankly, some issues deserve attention, but many do not, and it takes great wisdom to know the difference.

One thing's for sure. If we are to have an effective reputation in this community, we must have a firm handle on our mission, and refuse to be distracted from it by petty issues. It's so easy to get distracted, beloved. We must not, by God's grace, let that happen.

VI. We must practice church discipline when necessary (10-11).

Not everyone in the church at Crete would heed Paul's admonition in verse 9, nor would everyone in that church support Titus as he taught the Word of God. In fact, some were already opposing Titus and the truth.

What should happen to defiant church members who are a hindrance to the health of a church? We find the straightforward answer in verses 10-11, “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.”

The KJV calls the person a “heretic” in verse 10. When we hear that term, we tend to think of some apostate, a man like Jim Jones, who is spreading his cultic teachings. In actuality the idea behind this word here is much broader. William Barclay puts it this way, “A heretic is simply a person who has decided that he is right, and everybody else is wrong.” Another commentator, J. N. D. Kelly translates the word “separatist” since there were people in the church in Crete who were dividing the body.

The word “divisive” is actually the Greek term *hairesitikos*. It means “factious, contentious, heretical, causing divisions.” Christ died to make His church *one*. Christ loves His church! He wants His people to love His church, too, which means it's a serious matter to do anything that causes His church to fracture apart.

Let this sink in. It is a dangerous thing to divide and promote dissension in the church. In fact, it's so dangerous that something drastic needs to happen. What?

Verse 10 indicates that church discipline needs to occur. You say, “What is church discipline?” Jesus established the pattern in Matthew 18...

Matthew 18:15-18 “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”

Here Paul applies Jesus’ teaching to the issue facing the local church in Crete. Churches are not supposed to tolerate members who claim to be Christians yet refuse to follow Christ and who claim to believe the Bible but refuse to obey the Bible, and in this case.

Churches do not discipline a person for sin or we’d all be disciplined (every day!). Churches are to discipline members for the *refusal to repent* of sin. In Titus 3 Paul has in mind a person who is sinning against the unity of the church, a *divisive person*.

What should a church do with a divisive person? First, it should warn him in love. Go to him and urge him to stop his destructive activity. Urge him (the term is *noutheteo*). Admonish him. Insist that he stop what he’s doing to harm the church and begin immediately to support the unity and doctrine of the church. If he changes, praise God!

But what if he refuses to repent and persists in his divisive ways? Paul says a second step must follow. Warn him a second time that his divisive conduct must stop. Matthew 18 would indicate the second warning should probably include taking another person or two along to help the person see the severity of the situation. The tone of the meeting is neither jovial nor condescending. Your intent is to rescue your brother from the snare of the evil one who is the source of all division. You want to see him restored to fruitful service in the church.

What if he refuses the second warning? Verse 10 states, “After that have nothing to do with him.” Here’s how the KJV puts it, “after the first and second admonition, reject.” The word “reject” is a severe word. It means “to refuse, to turn away, to have nothing to do with.”

Why do something so severe? Wouldn’t it be the loving thing to keep on tolerating, to keep on warning, instead of taking the drastic third step of excommunication? We’re told the answer in verse 11, where Paul tells us why such severe action is needed: “You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.”

My friends, to God, sin is not a minor thing, especially sin that divides the church. When a person persists in continual sin, is unwilling to follow the instruction of God’s Word and God’s leaders, and refuses to change when warned twice, the church cannot afford to shrug it off as a trivial matter. In fact, Paul says such a person is warped [KJV ‘subverted,’ which means distorted or perverted; lit. ‘to turn inside out’]. The church is not condemning him for he is *self-condemned*. Consequently, for the good of the church as well as his own good he must be removed from the church.

It’s significant that there are several warnings like this in the New Testament...

Romans 16:17 “I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.”

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 “If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.”

I once heard Chuck Swindoll talk about an oil painting his mother had painted for him. It's a scene of a shepherd with his sheep. In the picture there are three kinds of sheep. One is the group that follows the shepherd closely. Then there are a few other sheep, removed from the shepherd, who look skeptically at him. And finally, way off in the corner is a lone sheep with his ear cocked, and a look on its face that says, "You can try for 50 years, but I won't follow you."

In Titus 3 the Good Shepherd is telling us what to do with professed sheep who refuse to follow His voice and undermine the unity of the fold. Warn them, then warn them again, and then remove them.

Nobody wants our church to be a sick church. We all want to be associated with a church that has a healthy reputation. But listen. If our church (or any church) is to have a godly reputation in a community, it must be willing to do the difficult task of exercising church discipline.

What else is necessary if a congregation is to have a godly reputation in a community? Here's a seventh characteristic...

VII. We must be generous in helping Christian workers who have needs (13).

In verse 13, Paul gives Titus a very personal instruction, “Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need.”

Who were Zenas and Apollos? They were two of Paul's teammates in the ministry. Quite possibly, they were the ones who delivered the letter to Titus from Paul. They were Christian workers.

What was Titus' responsibility to these servants of Christ? He was to help them, to make sure their needs were met.

Not everyone in the gospel ministry is a visionary-leader like Paul. Some fill the mop-up role of a Titus, or the behind-the-scenes role of a Zenas, and still others are brilliant orators like Apollos. But all are simply servants, Christian workers doing the job the King has given them to do.

And they all have needs. It's the church's responsibility to care for its own. When it does, it sends a clear message to the on-looking world, a message that enhances its reputation which says, “We are a people who follow in the steps of our Savior. We care for each other because He first cared for us.”

VIII. We must be known as being productive, hard workers (14).

Here is the eighth characteristic of a church that has a godly reputation in a community. Notice verse 14, “Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good [notice this emphasis on doing good again], in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives.”

This verse is so practical. Just as a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, so the testimony of a church depends on the contribution of every member. A church's reputation is built one member at a time.

Paul makes it clear, “Our people must learn to do what is good.” Our people—all of them. Not just Titus. Not just the elders. Every follower of Christ and member of the church must learn and then resolve to do what is good.

What does Paul have in mind? Back in 1:12, we learned that Cretans had a reputation for being “lazy gluttons.” Now Paul firmly insists things must be different in the church. There's no room for laziness in the church. Nobody is to “live off the system.” Each is to work, provide for daily necessities, and live a productive life. John Calvin once wrote, “All men were created to busy themselves with labor...for the common good.”⁴

In his book, *Why America Doesn't Work*, Chuck Colson begins chapter one with a statement by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. It's indicative of the value of a strong work-ethic:

“It is necessary to develop the people's sense of labor, and this has to be done as soon as possible because for half a century no one [in the USSR] has found any reward in work. There is no one to grow wheat for bread, no one to take care of cattle. Millions are living in conditions that cannot be called dwelling, and they spent decades in stinking hovels. The elderly and invalids are poor as beggars. Roads are in terrible condition, and nature itself is taking revenge.”⁵

The sad truth is, it's not just in the former USSR, as Colson himself observes, “Things aren't working well here in America.” Work is a bad word for many, and as Colson substantiates in his book, we are losing our work ethic in America.

But in the church, it must be different. We are to be known as productive, hard workers. We work, not so we can earn and hoard, but so we can provide and give. And a byproduct of a church full of people who do their jobs well is a God-honoring reputation in a community.

So here's what it takes. Let's take another look. To have a godly reputation in a community...

1. *We must demonstrate proper attitudes and actions towards government authorities (1).*
2. *We must be known in the community for being people who use our tongues to promote peace, are considerate, and humble (2).*
3. *We must live in the grip of grace, never forgetting that the reason we are different is because of what God has done, not what we have done (3-7).*
4. *We must be known for doing good in our community (8).*
5. *We must refuse to allow petty issues to distract us from our mission (9).*
6. *We must practice church discipline when necessary (10-11).*
7. *We must be generous in helping Christian workers who have needs (13).*
8. *We must be known as being productive, hard workers (14).*

The bottom line: The reputation of a church results from the reputation of its people.

1. *Is my life helping our church's reputation in the community?*
2. *What good work can I do for the glory of God this week?*

⁴ Taken from Charles Colson, *Why American Doesn't Work*, 31

⁵ Colson, p. 3.