

Titus 3:8-11; Psalm 90; Devoted to Doing Good I. Living the Profitable Life II. Avoiding the Unprofitable Life

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, are you living a profitable life? Now I am not asking if you are making a profit- I am not asking about your net worth and if that net worth is increasing. No, being a profitable Christian means something else entirely! Our world sees profit as something that is made after selling something. For example, if you buy your house for 200K and sell it for 300K, you have made 100K profit. But did you know that as Christians we are called to live profitable lives? So what then is the goal and direction of your life? What are living for? Our world says that those who die with the most toys wins. But that is not true! You can gain a lot of money and still not be a profitable person! So today as we return to Titus 3 we consider the profitable life. How are we to make the most out of our lives- to make the best use of these short days that God has given us? Even as Psalm 90 concludes, teach us to number our days and establish the work of our hands! So today we consider this theme: Jesus Christ ransoms us from a futile life so that we might by the Spirit be devoted to doing good. This morning we saw that good works are a part of our lives only after and because the Holy Spirit dwells within. We first need to be regenerated- born again! But for those in who are alive in Christ, good works are a necessary part of our lives!

I. Living the Profitable Life

In our first point we will consider v. 8- our calling to live a profitable life. Just as a good employer will invest in their staff- looking for a good return. So also, Jesus expects a good return on what talents He has invested in us as His servants! Now before we can dive into the calling to be profitable Christians, we have to remember where we have been. We have seen in ch. 3 that we have been born again- born from above- regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit as 3:5 puts it. He saved us- Our Triune God has saved us sinner and set us free from bondage to sin, death and hell. We, having been purchased, now belong to Jesus our Savior in body and soul and in life and in death. We are justified by grace- becoming heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Belonging to Jesus- receiving His precious blood- changes how we live! We belong to a new household- we are in the family of God! As the parable of the talents proves- we are servants who have been given gifts. And Jesus would have us use these gifts according to His design. So how we use these gifts does not earn our status-

but rather is a proof or response to our status! Or I could ask this question- for what purpose have you been saved? What does Jesus want you to do with your life- now that you belong to Him? Jesus does not save us so that can sit on our backsides doing nothing! We are not delivered so that can be passive like bumps on a log! Christians don't twiddle their thumbs as they wait for the end. No, He wants you to be a profitable servant- one who is devoted to doing good and bringing glory to God! Using the talents and time God have given you wisely! Now this focus on good works is one that runs through this chapter- just look at 3:1, 3:8 and 3:14. Ready for good works, devoted to good works, fruitful and dedicated to good works. So what then are these good works? Well, as you might recall, good works are those actions that are done in faith- done to God's glory in thanksgiving- and are done in accordance with God's commands as we find in HC LD 33. The grace of God that we have received enables us to live obedient lives! By the Spirit we are renewed- the Holy Spirit equips us to live holy lives. These actions are for God's glory- but they are also excellent and profitable for people as v. 8 concludes. Excellent works are those that are good, best, beautiful and praiseworthy. Noble actions. And these are profitable for others- they are helpful, advantageous and useful! These actions render to others good services that build up and bless! Or actions benefit them when we engage in them! Our fellow man enjoys a blessing as we act. Now what- specifically- are the works that Paul has in mind? Which actions are those that benefit and build others up? Well, there is a list given in 3:1- to be submissive and obedient- ready for good works- speaking evil of no one- avoiding quarreling, gentle and courteous. And we could expand that by summarizing the second table of the 10 Commandments- loving your neighbor as yourself. Or as Gal. 6 says- doing good to all- and especially to the household of faith. So these good works are various- anything that is for the building up and benefit of those who receive. As simple and submission and obedience to your parents- speaking with gentleness and kindness. Even the little things like courtesy- such as holding doors open for others and letting others go first. Sharing with others- generous with your time! There is no exhaustive list because so many things are in view here- both in our actions and with our words. Good works are not just the big events- like going on a service project- which is a good idea. It is also is small, everyday things. Helping your siblings or co-workers get their tasks done. A kind word spoken to a stranger. But notice that these things

are not just a good idea- these are strongly affirmed! As v. 8 opens- this is a trustworthy saying and these things are to be insisted upon! Paul instructs Timothy to insist! These good works are to be encouraged in the strongest of terms! In other words, good works are not an optional task and good idea- but not really necessary! No- these are to be asserted with confidence! God's people must act this way- good trees must produce good fruit! We must be careful to devote ourselves to them- devotion cannot be half-hearted! Jesus is expecting a return on His investment with you- His talents that He has given are to be used and they should bring blessing to others! So we must give careful thought as to how we live and act in this world- as a profitable servant who obeys his master! Far too many Christians are living thoughtlessly! They go through their days with little consideration of how to make the best use of the time set before them! They just go through the motions without thinking of how their lives affect those around them! But good works are not an add on- rather they are a necessary part of our lives as we reflect the grace we have received! God's people are to spread the aroma of Christ as II Cor. puts it. Our words are seasoned with grace and are useful for building up those who hear. Our actions should be like drops of rain on the thirsty land. We should leave a wake of green blessing wherever we go! There is also an unstated principle that must be remembered- to be a blessing to others it is assumed that you are involved in their lives. We live in a work and worship from home society. Our world is increasingly isolated- even in the church we live our lives without meaningful connection to others. But to do things that are excellent and profitable for others- we must actually be involved in their lives! Hospitality- loving the stranger- and welcoming others into your life is not just a good idea- but it is urged upon you! In the name of Christ- insisted! Open your heart and your lives to others beyond your immediate family. Invest in others as Jesus has invested in you!

II. Avoiding the Unprofitable Life

But not everyone has beneficial effect on others. One person's life may build others up- while another might constantly tear people down! One person is like refreshing rain- while another like a scorching drought! Perhaps you know someone who is toxic- pollutes those who are in their midst. There is contrast here- Paul instructs us to be devoted to good which is profitable for others- but also as v. 9 states- avoid what is

unprofitable! We are in fact to avoid certain kinds of actions. To avoid is to shun- or to turn away from. To reject and refuse to practice certain things because we know that they have a corrosive effect on us and others! These actions are unprofitable- instead of doing good they do ill- they are bad for others- they are useless! They are also worthless- they have no value- they are empty! Like salt water ingested by a thirsty person- causing more harm than good! So what are things- what kind of actions are we as God's people supposed to avoid and refrain from? As 3:9 says- foolish controversies, genealogies and quarrel about the law. The church on Crete- and also in other areas Paul had visited- had different factions that prized themselves in their own genetic heritage. Paul addressed this in Phil. 3 as well. Some people took great pride in their ability to trace their own family tree back for many generations. Other groups were teaching a strict, pharisaical legalism. They established their own, human laws as a way to identify the truly righteous and religious. Both groups were putting their confidence in the works of the flesh- having pride in their own history or works. These kinds of people are offensive- they are so smug and self-righteous that they repel others. Now, the Law is good if used properly- and genealogies are important in the Bible to establish the lineage of Jesus Christ. But within the church, these factions were boasting in their own merits and looked down on others. These sort of discussions and quarrels are unprofitable and only cause unnecessary division. Now in the church today, you can still find group of people that prioritize their own heritage to exclude those who come from other lands. And there are those who are so legalistic that they pollute the doctrine of grace as they boast in their own abilities. But there are other quarrels that are unprofitable and worthless. There are other people who continue to stir up unnecessary division. There are people who seem to bring conflict- wherever they go. Those who elevate preference or opinion to that of mandate and law. Individual desires and worldly ways of thinking can infiltrate the church. James says that fights and quarrels come from sinful desires that wage war within you. So what are some examples of conflict in the church today? Well, a glaring example can be seen in the church as we went through the pandemic. Personal opinions and preferences were elevated to law- and the church was carved up and divided along lines of pro or anti a whole list of medical opinions and actions. Or even how the church was supposed to respond to governmental leaders and mandates- that caused a lot of

division in the churches. But there are a host of things that could cause divisions and quarrels within the church. I found out this past week that most of church conflict today centers around the time of worship service, the length of the service and disagreement on the style of worship. Sometimes conflict arises over silly or superficial things due to unaddressed desires and feelings. When you fill a church with sinners, conflict is almost a foregone conclusion. But God's people are to be slow to anger- slow to wrath. Not quick to jump into conflict or start a fight. It needs to be said- sometimes conflict is necessary! But some other things are not worth arguing about. Love overlooks a multitude of wrongs- as Jesus exemplified a heart of humility which considers the needs of others more than our own. It takes real wisdom to know when it is time to stand and fight- and when it is time to let our own desires go for the good of others. A fight for the truth and a stance on principle is a godly trait- but in other areas like personal preference and opinion- the rule of Christian charity and forbearance is to be expressed. Note that Paul says- foolish controversies are unprofitable and worthless- not all controversies. We need wisdom to discern which controversies are foolish and unhelpful and which ones are necessary for the sake of truth!

To conclude, as God's people we are filled with the Spirit who renews us within. We are renewed for holy living. Jesus Christ ransoms us from a futile life so that we might by the Spirit be devoted to doing good. As II Tim. 2 puts it, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. We can be profitable servants- not to earn or even pay God back for what He has done for us. But we can respond with works that are pleasing to Him- as He prepares them in advance for us to do! Doing good works is a necessary part of our lives- and they are used by God to be a blessing to others as well as bring glory to His name! We are a new creation- created in Christ for good works! So let your good deeds be done to your fellow man, that they may glorify God on the day He returns! May our works build others up- being useful and profitable servants of the King! Done in thankfulness- with hearts of faith and for His glory! Do not be unfruitful- but rather overflowing with thanksgiving!