

## **“PROFITABLE LIVING”**

Bible text: Titus 3:1-15 For New Horizon URC.

August 27, 2017, first sermon. By Pastor Rand Lankheet

**Introduction:** In the area of business and finance, making a “profit” is very important.

The revenue, the money coming in, must be greater than the money going out.

Then a business is “profitable.” With profit the business will stay alive; and it can grow. /

-In the book of Titus, the apostle Paul says that certain things “are profitable” for Christians.

Not in a financial or material sense.

What is “**profitable**” in our lives are the **good works** that we show.

**1.** Look first at Paul’s **exhortation for profitable living**. [Read vs. 8.

Titus was the pastor-missionary of the churches on the island of Crete.

This island is located in the Mediterranean Sea.

Paul tells Titus, to “affirm” certain things. Things about doing “good works.”

-Now all of this is set in the context of the gospel message. We don’t start with good works.

No. We start with **the grace of God in Jesus**. And that’s where Paul starts. [Read vss. 3-5. Like those Christians, we were born in sin.

We lived in foolishness and disobedience against God. Yet, God has loved us.

That love of God “appeared” to us, especially, when He sent Jesus to this earth.

God saved us by Jesus...by Jesus’ atoning death and by his life of perfect righteousness.

We are not saved by our works, by any goodness in ourselves.

No! Only by “His mercy” we have been saved. [Vs. 5.

What’s more...God has changed us, when he saved us. He renewed us by His Holy Spirit.

That’s the starting point. That’s the foundation: we are first saved by God’s grace, mercy.

-In vs. 8 and following, Paul builds on that foundation.

Once we are saved, we then must “be careful **to maintain good works.**”

Do you see the connection?

Being saved by God’s mercy, in Jesus, **naturally leads to good works!**

Remember the outline of the Heidelberg Catechism? Guilt-Grace-Gratitude.

We first learn we are **guilty** before God...and are saved by His **grace** alone. In Jesus.

But then follows a life of “**gratitude.**” That is, thankful living. Doing good works.

[Read again vs. 8.

In the business world, a company must be “profitable;” it must show a profit.

So it must be for us, as God’s people, saved by Jesus Christ. We must show a profit.

Everyone profits when Christians do good, when Christians live a good and godly lifestyle.

Think of it: who benefits (profits) from your Christian actions, and words, and thoughts?

-Our Catechism gives us some help in this. Q. 86 says that when we Christians do good works

there is benefit to God, in some sense;

There is also benefit to ourselves; and there is some benefit to others. What’s the benefit to God, if we can speak that way?

Well, when we think, speak, and live rightly, according to His commands, God is exalted.

He is thanked and praised by your good deeds.

-And there is also a big benefit to yourself, as a Christian.

The Catechism says that our assurance of salvation is strengthened when we live rightly.

When we see our good works, we become more assured of our salvation.

-And what’s the benefit, the profit, to people around us, when we do good works?

Well, obviously, they are often helped by our loving deeds towards them.

Even more importantly, our kind deeds are a witness, a testimony, of God's grace.

Our good works are often used by God to lead unbelievers to Christ.  
-So Paul writes that we Christians must be "careful" to do good works.

Because good and godly living is "profitable" to everyone.

-Show me **Christian parents** who are raising their children in the Lord.

The parents will profit in that. Oh, sometimes it can be a struggle.

Especially when it comes to firmly disciplining your children.

But, in the end, there will be a good profit.

There's a profit for your child. And for you as a parent. And for the entire church.

There is even a big benefit to the world.... as we raise our children to do what is good, and right, and helpful. Our children will be raised to be good citizens in our land!

-Show me a **Christian husband and wife** who do good works for one another.

A husband who loves his wife sacrificially and unselfishly, as Christ loved the church.

A wife who submits to her husband's overall leadership in their home.

They will both end up profiting in their lives and in their marriage. And their children!

-We must all "maintain" good works in our lives. We must obey God's commands.

Because that will be profitable to you and to others.

**2. The apostle goes on to what he calls "unprofitable" things.**

Some people in the churches on the island of Crete were not living in good ways.

In vs. 10 and 11 Paul refers to these people. He calls them "contentious" or "divisive. They were warped: bent and twisted in sinful ways.

The things they were involved in were "unprofitable."

What were they doing? [Read vs. 9. Now Paul doesn't explain this, in detail.

Somehow they were getting involved in “contentions” and “foolish controversies.”

Some of this involved “genealogies” and certain “quarrels (strivings) about the law.”

It’s probably the same thing Paul is referring to earlier in this letter. [Read 1:14.

This might refer to how some Jews studied the Old Testament genealogies.

You know, the lists of “so-and-so begat so-and-so” found in the book of Genesis.

In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, we also find lists of various Jewish families.

It could be that some Jews were eager to find some famous ancestor.

All to make themselves seem more important.

-Paul is not against learning about your family’s genealogy. But he is rebuking those who use

their genealogy to raise controversy in the church. Paul would say it is sinful to take pride in your ancestors. Or to make up big stories about them.

Think about it....that could bring division in the church. +

You see, other church members have other backgrounds. They have other ancestors.

The Church of Christ includes all varieties of peoples.

No one should be made to feel like second-class members, because of your bragging./

-These “unprofitable people” were also involved in “quarrels about the law.” [Read 3:9.

These people could be “Judaizers.” That’s what Paul calls them in other letters.

These Judaizers wanted to put OT ceremonial laws upon the Gentile converts. Laws like circumcision, or observing new moon days, or even the Saturday-Sabbath Day.

We don’t know the details about the “controversies” in those churches.

But they were causing quarrels and divisions in the churches. Says Paul, such foolish controversies are “unprofitable.” They profit no one. Those quarrels can really hurt people.

**2.B.** How to deal with those kind of people? Those causing needless controversy?

[Read vs. 10-11. Strong words. But, oh, how necessary even in churches today.

Now we must add this point: not all debates/discussions over Biblical issues are wrong.

Our own denomination, the United Reformed churches, came out of these kinds of debates.

We said to our former denomination that in many areas they were violating the Scriptures.

And, finally, we had to leave.

What Paul is speaking about here is quarrelling about “foolish controversies.”

Things not clearly taught in the Bible.

For example: “genealogies” and disputes over old Jewish laws. Here’s the point: Don’t quarrel about things **NOT clearly taught** in God’s Word./

-God’s Word is clear about such people. [Read Titus 3:9.

Such quarrels are simply “unprofitable and useless.”

Why? Because their quarrels cause division in the local church.

Christians must be united on the clear teachings of God’s Word.

**2.C. What if someone continues** in these foolish, divisive controversies in the church?

[Read vs. 10. This is probably a reference to what we call today, “excommunication.”

After a repeated warning, eventually a divisive person must be cut off from the congregation.

Such a member **proves himself** to be, as Paul writes, “warped and sinful.”

Actually, such a person has actually condemned himself. [Read vs. 11.

It is the particular role of elders, along with pastors, to deal with such members of the church.

And if these people persist....refuse to listen... look at vs. 10

Paul says—"do not have anything more to do with that person."

**3.** Paul goes on to give some **EXAMPLES** of profitable living. [Read vss. 12-14.

Here's the same theme, repeated once more in this short letter of Titus.

In vs. 14, Paul says it again: Christians must do what is good.

They must "maintain" their good works. Keep on living in good and godly ways, according to God's Word.

And Titus himself is an example of someone who was doing good works.

Titus was profitable to Paul. He was of benefit to Paul.

As were other men mentioned here: Artemas, Zenas, and Apollos. They helped Paul.

They helped the churches. They benefitted everyone they came in contact with./

-Notice something in vs. 14. There is another benefit of doing good works.

Especially in that day, on the island of Crete. In that culture. By maintaining good works, they will meet "urgent needs."

Another translation puts it this way: they will "provide for [their] daily necessities."

That is, doing their daily work, they will have enough food, drink, shelter, and clothing.

And extra, to help others. You see, doing good, includes doing our daily work.

Being diligent and faithful on the job is part of our good works, as believers today.

As we go to work, we're doing good for ourselves and our families.

And we are doing good for society, in general.

We're doing good for the company. We're pleasing our boss, making his or her life easier.

And we are being a good witness to unbelievers in the workplace!

Christians should be good workers. That is part of our testimony to the non-Christians in our workplace. Not only working hard, but being wise. Being patient.

Demonstrating all the fruit of the Spirit, as we do our daily work.

-Also working in the home, as many mothers do.

Women, mothers, you should be working to turn your house into a loving home.

Working diligently in your daily calling, to make your home a comfortable place. A peaceful place. A place of relaxation for your family.

What an important work that is! And what a benefit that is, also to your husband!

He comes home..... +

By working hard and diligently, we **usually** earn enough money to provide food, shelter,

Oh, sometimes as hard as we try, we cannot provide for ourselves sufficiently.

Then the church, through the deacons, will assist us.

But, generally, by doing good in our daily work, we will provide for our daily necessities.

**3. B.** In the last verse, Paul himself is an **example** of profiting others. Being a benefit to the believers. [Read vs. 15. Paul was a friendly man. Don't miss that point.

Yes, sometimes Paul could be very strong, and blunt. But in his letters to the churches, you can always hear his love. His love for the believers, his love for the churches.

So Paul ends this short letter, saying: "Grace be with all of you." That's God's grace.

And remember, that's where everything starts. It all starts with God's grace to us in Jesus.

God's wonderful mercy, by which we are saved.

God's grace by which our dead hearts were renewed and reborn.

And the sanctifying grace God gives us, by His Holy Spirit.

That we are enabled, empowered, to do good works. To live profitable lives.

**Conclusion:** If the apostle Paul could see us today, in the Greater Toronto area,

he would greet us likewise. He would love us as he loved the Christians on the island of Crete.

Not because we're always so loveable.

We still struggle with our faults and failures. As did those Christians. But, Paul would remind us of his love for us.

Like the Christians on that island, we are also "in the faith."

We have put our faith, in Jesus, our Saviour.

Only in him, will we do good works. Living profitable lives. LET US PRAY.