

# TOUGH GRACE IN DIFFICULT PLACES A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF TITUS

## STUDY EIGHT

### Living before a Watching World

*Titus 3:1–8*

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*While we were living empty lives in darkness, God broke through.  
What did He do? He saved us.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**I**N his book, *Rumors of Another World*, Philip Yancey recounts a short story by author Carmen Corde. In the story, a woman gives birth to a son who is blind. Determined to never let him know that he is blind, she forbids family members from referring to colors, light, or anything visible. When he grows into a boy, a girl next door jumps the fence into his backyard. As the children play, she uses the forbidden words to describe a world he can't imagine—a world of sight. The girl's words shatter his view of reality, and he refuses to believe her.

Yancey draws the analogy:

In modern times, Christians resemble the strange girl who brings a message from outside. To a skeptical audience they bring rumors of another world beyond the fence, of an afterlife beyond death, of a loving God who is somehow working out his will in the chaotic history of this planet. As in Carmen Corde's story, the news may not be welcome.<sup>1</sup>

Many people know only what's inside the "fence"—the natural world. Their world is dark, desperate for real affection, and doubtful of anything beyond. They know nothing of God's heavenly realm. The message of a good God sending His Son to earth to offer eternal life seems too strange to believe.

For people stuck in their worldview, words alone won't persuade them to change their minds. In Titus, Paul urges us to reveal Christ's kingdom by our good deeds. People need to see evidence of Christ—expressions of love, mercy, grace, joy, and hope of another world—in the lives of those who claim Him as their King.



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## PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you open the Scriptures, with the psalmist's simple prayer, invite the Lord to be your teacher and to open your eyes to His truth:

*O Lord, your unfailing love fills the earth;  
teach me your decrees.* (Psalm 119:64)



## TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The theme of “good deeds” recurs many times in Titus. Paul urged Titus to “show yourself to be an example of good deeds” (Titus 2:7 NASB), unlike the false teachers, who were “worthless for any good deed” (1:16 NASB). Christ gave His life “to make us his very own people, totally committed to good deeds” (2:14).

In Titus 3, Paul mentions “good deeds” three more times (3:1, 8, 14). What deeds should Christians do? What is the theological basis for doing good? Why are good deeds important? Read [Titus 3:1–8](#) to overview Paul's answers, and then we'll take a closer look at the details.



## Observation: Right Doctrine, Good Deeds

*Observation* opens the Scriptures to our senses—what we see, feel, imagine, and think.<sup>2</sup> Take time as you read the verses to let the words sink in, looking for key thoughts, repetition, and the flow of Paul's argument. There's so much to see!

### Good Citizens and Good Neighbors—Titus 3:1–2

Paul's instructions for good conduct for Christians in Crete began with a reminder “to submit to the government and its officers. They should be obedient, always ready to do what is good” (Titus 3:1). In Paul's day, the emperor of Rome was Nero, one of the cruelest, most sadistic, immoral, insecure, and villainous despots to govern Rome. In AD 59, he had his own mother murdered! Nero would later unleash waves of persecution against Christians.

Why do you think Paul said Christians should submit to Rome, obey its laws, and do good—despite Rome's violent discrimination?

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According to [Titus 3:2](#), how did Paul say Christians should respond to their neighbors, even to those who sought their harm? What qualities should Christians be known for?

*Those whom God saves by His grace need to look out for those who haven't yet come to the Savior. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

## Reminder of God's Amazing Grace—Titus 3:3–7

Why show grace to enemies? Because we were just like them before we came to Christ. How did Paul describe our life before Christ in [Titus 3:3](#)?

What did God do for us, according to [3:4–7](#)? Paul names the three members of the Trinity in this passage. Can you identify them? What action does each member perform?

*While we were engaged in sin, God broke through and captured our hearts. Through our simple act of faith, He declared us righteous because of what His Son did for us. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

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## Balancing Right Belief with Convincing Behavior—Titus 3:8

God saved us by His grace, “not because of the righteous things we had done” (Titus 3:5). Titus can “speak confidently” about salvation by grace (3:8 NASB). But knowledge alone is insufficient. What fruit should the gospel produce, according to 3:8?

*If you believe right but behave wrong, you’re not a good witness. Believing right should not just change our thinking but also change the way we live.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Interpretation: New Birth, New Life, Made Right

*Interpretation* digs into the meaning of the passage by defining key words. “New birth,” “new life,” and “made right” in *Titus 3:5, 7* are translations of three theologically rich Greek words listed in the following chart. Look up the Greek words in your Bible-study resources or click on the link to the Greek dictionary at [billmounce.org](http://billmounce.org). Write down the definitions of the words in the right column.

Greek Word	Definition
new birth <i>palingenesia</i>	
new life <i>anakainosis</i>	
made right <i>dikaioo</i>	

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Put in your own words the meaning of these pillars of truth and how they form a solid foundation for your faith.

Unbelievers inside the “fence” can’t imagine new birth and new life in the Holy Spirit, nor do they understand what it’s like to be made right with God through faith in Christ. How can Christians convince them of the reality of Christ’s kingdom—the world outside their backyard?

*Through our deeds, we show God’s kindness, His love, His mercy, and His grace. Who doesn’t want that? Who isn’t attracted to that? —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



## **Correlation: Light, Love, and Respect**

*Correlation* leads us to other passages in Scripture that support and augment our interpretation. What do the following three passages reveal about Christ’s calling for His followers?

For those who *live in darkness*, Christ calls us to . . .

*Matthew 5:14–16:* \_\_\_\_\_

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For those who are *desperate for real love*, Christ commands us to . . .

*John 13:34–35:* \_\_\_\_\_

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For those who *doubt our message*, Paul teaches us to . . .

*1 Thessalonians 4:11–12:* \_\_\_\_\_

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*People in the world are marked by darkness, desperation, and doubt. Christ leaves us here for a purpose—to be light-bearers, love-givers, and respect-earners. This is witnessing at its best. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



## **Application: Principles to Live By**

Two applications rise to the surface of our study.

First, *it takes authenticity and integrity to win a hearing.* We shine Christ's light when we treat our enemies with kindness, love, mercy, and grace. In what ways can you demonstrate authenticity and integrity toward someone who doesn't know Christ?

Second, *it's impossible to convince anyone of any truth we are not living.* Seeking forgiveness from those we've offended and forgiving as Christ forgave us are ways we demonstrate the message we proclaim. Who are the non-Christians you rub shoulders with? What message would you like to communicate? How can your actions better communicate that message?

The starting point of any relationship is common ground. We, too, lived inside the “fence” in darkness, desperation, and doubt. Only when the Holy Spirit opened our eyes to our need for Christ could we see His kingdom and imagine a life secure in Him. Ask the Lord to give you a heart of compassion for others, and then express your heart through deeds of mercy and grace.

A Christian makes the unseen world visible when sound doctrine and good deeds work together, when faith prompts action, when grace received becomes grace given away.<sup>3</sup>

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## A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, I once was lost in sin, but when You revealed Your kindness and love, You saved me. Only by Your grace did You take me to Yourself. No righteousness I bring merits Your favor. I devote myself to Your Son as my Savior and to reflecting His mercy and love to those who desperately need the hope of His kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.*

## ENDNOTES

1. Yancey, Philip. *Rumors of Another World: What on Earth Are We Missing?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 43.
2. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"
3. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014), 343.

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2006, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

