

For those who don't know the story of saving private Ryan.

It's a movie set during WWII, the Chief of Staff, General Marshall is informed that three of a woman's sons have been killed and that she's going to receive the notifications of their demise at the same time. And when he learns that a fourth son is still unaccounted for, the General decides to send Cpt. Miller and seven other soldiers to go look for Private Ryan and bring him back to his mother, despite being told that it's highly unlikely that he is still alive and the area that he was known to be at is very dangerous.

The scene we have just seen is at the end of the movie, out of the original 8 men sent to find Private Ryan only two men survived. Private Ryan is seen pleading with his wife, Tell me I have lived a good life, tell me I am a Good man.

See Private Ryan had a good reason to ask for this adoration, 8 men had risked their lives to help find private Ryan and bring him home and 6 of them had lost their lives in the process, he wanted to know that their sacrifice was worth it. Well today we are looking at why we should live a good life.

See just like Private Ryan we have been saved, and our saving came at a huge cost. Titus 3 is a great summary of the gospel, we see in verses 3- 7 that we have all lived a life which is unworthy of being saved, but it is not because of what we have done that we have been saved but it is because of his mercy that we have been saved.

Private Ryan in the movie has been viewed as earning his salvation and Captain Miler's last words to him was you have earned this. The eight men in the beginning of the movie didn't believe that Ryan deserved the free ticket home and even Ryan himself didn't believe it and refuses to leave when the men arrive to take him home and its not until after the final battle in the movie that he believes he has earned it.

But the truly great thing about God's love for us is that we don't deserve the salvation, but he loves us that much that he not only gives us the salvation that we don't deserve but we also become heirs with Christ. See we don't earn the free ticket home, it is given to us by grace but Titus 3 reminds us that we should be asking the same thing that Private Ryan asks his wife, Tell me that I have lived a good life. It shows us that we have been saved to do what is good.

It is not our works that save us, we have only ever been saved by grace and will always only every be saved by grace alone, but as a result of being saved v8 reminds us that we are to devote ourselves to going

what is good. For these things are profitable for everyone. See doing good works does not earn us our salvation but it is profitable to others.

In our James 2 reading today we see the relationship between faith and works unpacked even further and James goes on to say that a faith without works is a dead faith.

In the passage James is not speaking of how we are saved but instead he is instructing the believers who have already been saved by their faith that their faith should be accompanied by works.

James is not saying that works help you be saved as this would mean that Jesus sacrifice on the cross was not enough to save us and that God needs our help to save us, no James is saying that we should be bearing the fruits of our faith by doing good works just as the book of Titus.

So we don't do good works to be saved or stay saved. We do good works because we are saved. The great Reformers of the sixteenth century used to say that good works are not a necessary condition of salvation but they are a necessary consequence of salvation. They said our theology does not free us from good works, it frees us from *false opinions concerning* good works'.

This means that our good works don't save us in any way, but once we are saved we naturally obey God's law and do good works which is a sign of our being saved and this is profitable for everyone.

Martin Luther puts it this way. Faith is God's work in us, that changes us and gives new birth from God. It kills the Old Adam and makes us completely different people. It changes our hearts, our spirits, our thoughts and all our powers. It brings the Holy Spirit with it. Yes, it is a living, creative, active and powerful thing, this faith. Faith cannot help doing good works constantly. It doesn't stop to ask if good works ought to be done, but before anyone asks, it already has done them and continues to do them without ceasing.

In the movie Saving Private Ryan, the men went looking for Private Ryan originally because they were commanded too and during the movie you see them getting upset about losing their friends for this unknown guy. By the end of the movie they are willing to lay down their lives for Private Ryan, why do they do this, well they do this because they see that Private Ryan is worthy of being served as a friend and comrade. Well for Christians we are responding to the gift of grace and

we have the Holy Spirit working in us, we should not act like the men in the beginning of the movie but instead we should act like the men at the end of the movie willing to do good.

This leads on into the second point in verses 9-11 of what we are not to do. We are commanded to avoid certain things such as foolish controversies, genealogies, arguments and quarrels about the law for they are unprofitable and useless.

Notice what Paul is not saying here; Paul is not saying that we shouldn't discuss or defend the truth. Rather, he is warning against "foolish" controversies, things that are unprofitable and useless. In other letters Paul gives very strict instructions to defend the faith.

See in the early church, people did not have the bible that we have today to test all teachings against and there was a number of false teachers out there. One such teaching was the adhering to the Jewish law. Some false teachers insisted that converted Gentiles needed to follow the Jewish traditions and some of these traditions were things like Should a Jew eat an egg laid on a festival day? What sort of wick and oil they are to use for candles he burns on the Sabbath? Paul says this is foolish, unprofitable and useless. The genealogies spoken of here are speculations about the origins and descendants of persons, which some thought had spiritual significance. In 1 Timothy 1:4, Paul refers to these genealogies as "endless." They just go on and on and on.

The best thing to do is to avoid the kinds of arguments as they take us away from the salvation story or going after what is good. Now this is also true for us today, yes it may not be about what type of oil to use in our candles but the same can be said about issues that are not core to our faith. Think about the last time you engaged in one of these arguments. How did you feel after it? Did you change the other person's mind or did you just end up upsetting them and yourself? Now think about those around who witnessed this argument, how do you think it portrays Christianity? Most religious arguments are unprofitable and useless. They are a waste of time and energy and often, we just turn people off from the truth of the gospel.

What Paul is saying to us here is that we should avoid these issues and focus on doing good and what is profitable for everyone. In our witnessing and contending for the faith, we must be gentle with people and respectful toward them. If we don't show courtesy, kindness and love, how can we expect to do any good?

In verses 10-11 Paul gives another command and this is not an easy one, we are commanded to deal with divisive people (10-11). Paul recognises the estrangements that can come when divisive people are allowed to do and say what they want. He says *“Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.”* These words are necessary because our Christian fellowship must not be allowed to fracture. Jesus said that our defining characteristic to a watching world is the fact that we are to “love one another”

The two warnings system employed here by Paul is the upholding of Jesus’ own teaching on the topic in Matt 18:15-17. *“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. **16** But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ **17** If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”*

So we have seen so far that we are to do what is good as a result of our salvation and not partake in useless foolish arguments but what does this look like in practice. I believe we find the answer here in the end of Titus. These verses show us that we are to practice hospitality towards each other, we are to put others needs above our own.

John Wesley of the 1700s is quoted as saying: “Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can.”

Now that’s a lot of doing good and I would say that is a pretty good code to live by. But see John Wesley didn’t come up with this himself, all you need to do is look at the example of Jesus to see where he got it from.

Acts 10:38 *“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.”*

Jesus went about doing good, all kinds of good: providing food, teaching God’s Word, healing from diseases, casting out demons, etc.

We need to do the same, although we are somewhat limited in comparison to what Jesus did. So what must we do? Anything we can. Teach, preach, give, share, listen, love, etc. We must not be selfish with

our lives and with what God has given us.

We are to avoid selfishness by being quick to see needs and respond to those needs. This is exactly what Paul is instructing the people of Crete to do for Zenas and Apollos. Paul is giving them the opportunity to put into practice their doing good for the profitability of people.

13 Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need. 14 Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.

This is a very hard thing for Australians to do. As a culture Australia rates number two in the world in being individualistic scoring 90 out of a 100. The only other country higher is the USA scoring 91.

See Australia does not talk of we but talk about I, so as Christians we have a hard job in practicing hospitality as it is counter culture for us but when we do we can be a great example for non-believers. Let's be like the eight men who went out to find Private Ryan, giving their all for the benefit profitability of others. Let's serve one another doing good.

Let's pray.

Dear Heavenly Father,

We thank you for your love for us, we thank you that at the right time when we were still your enemy you sent your Son Jesus to die for us, to bring us back into a relationship with you. We thank you for the book of Titus, we thank you for the promises that you have given us in this book, we pray that we that you will be using your spirit in us to help us do good works not to gain favour with you but as a result of your grace shown towards us for the good of others. We pray this in your sons great name Amen