

"The Diligence of Grace" - Titus 3:12-15

Adam Casalino, August 24th 2025

When I was in Bible college, I studied the life of a man named John Wesley. He spread the gospel across Britain in the 1700s. Thanks to him, countless lives were brought into the kingdom. He trained circuit preachers who traveled from town to town, teaching and preaching. Sometimes, they stayed in one place just long enough to finish their sermon, before riding through the night to the next town. John Wesley was coordinated all this activity, while he too was constantly on the move. People were shocked to learn how busy he was, even later in life. After a colleague criticized his busyness John wrote back "You do not understand my manner of life. Though I am always in haste, I am never in a hurry."

As busy as John Wesley was, it pales in comparison to his forerunners, Paul and Titus. Paul and his companions preached across an ancient world hostile to the gospel of grace. But, they were faithful, because they had that same kind of energy that possessed John Wesley and his students. What is that energy? How do you get it? How can someone become so passionate, so diligent, that they'd carry out the hard work of ministry in a land that is hostile to the Word of God?

The answer of course, is that this energy is birthed out of the gospel of grace. When someone comes in contact with the grace of God, through Jesus Christ, they are transformed into someone eager to pull out all the stops in service to the Lord. We see that diligence is every line of Paul's letter to Titus. Even in the very last portion of this book, we see that diligence on display. Our message today is the *"The Diligence of Grace."* We are going to see three ways we serve God with diligence.

Point 1: We leave something good behind (Titus 3:12)

Titus 3:12 (ESV): *When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.*

This sounds like a harmless enough sentence, but it's not. All throughout this letter, Paul has entrusted Titus with a huge task. He was to pastor not one, but many house churches on Crete. The work he had to do, included: 1) appointing qualified elders, 2) rebuking false teachers, and 3) establishing sound doctrine to fledgling Christians. That's a tall order for one man. Now, after giving Titus all this work to do, ***Paul tells him that he's going to be replaced!***

Put yourself in Titus' shoes. He's toiling day after day, exercising church discipline, correcting errors, answering endless questions. Confronting dangerous false teachers. And so on. Only to know that someone else is going to sweep in and take over! If it had been me, I'd be a little chafed by this news.

One of two men will relieve Titus of his leadership role over the churches in Crete:

- We don't know anything about **Artemas**; he is only mentioned here in the NT.
- **Tychicus** is mentioned a few more times. Acts 20:4 reveals he was from Asia Minor; Paul calls him a "beloved brother" in Colossians 4:7 and Ephesians 6:21.

Because they were co-laborers with Paul, we can conclude they were trustworthy men. What do you think was going through Titus' mind when he read this part of the letter? *Maybe* he was chafed, like me, but... probably not. What this *does* tell him, though--and this is important--was that his work on Crete had a **time limit**. Very soon, someone was going to take over his job. That meant, he had to get busy. What if Artemas showed up a few months later, only to find the churches in disarray, with no elders and false teachers running amuck? That would have been a disgrace. Titus

couldn't delay doing what Paul told him to do. He had to be diligent so that when the other man came, he'd be proud to pass on the work.

This brings us to our first point this morning. What happens when serve God diligently? **We leave something good behind.**

None of us are "indispensable," but we're all needed. In many ways, Titus was doing all this work on Crete, just to hand it off to another man. Imagine how bad things would have gotten on Crete, if Titus had dragged his feet? Problems get worse, not better, if you ignore them. If Titus wasn't diligent, the churches would have flounder. If Titus didn't appoint good elders, rebuke false teachers, and spread sound doctrine, the Christians would have been in big trouble. Those false teachers would have destroyed the churches, leading many away into darkness.

Just because you know you'll one day leave a position doesn't mean you do a bad job. Just the opposite. In a relay race, every runner plays a key role. You might be in the middle; there were runners before you and runners coming after you. But if you slack off when it's your time to run, all the others will struggle. You need to run with all your strength so you can proudly pass that baton to the man coming up after you.

All of us, eventually, will have to hand over whatever we are doing now to someone else. If you've been walking with the Lord for any length of time, you know what I'm talking about. God brings us through seasons. For a time, we are at a certain place doing a certain thing. Then God flips a switch and says, "Time to get going!" You smell it in the air; God is up to something. He is about to move you into a new season of life and service. That might even include physically moving to a different city, state, or country.

Parents have about 18 years to raise their children, then they're off on their own. Workers rarely stay in the same job forever; they change jobs or move on to a different position. Even the home you live in right now won't be yours forever.

There is funny, little phrase realtors like to use these days. If there are any realtors here, you may have used it. These days, they call the house you are looking at buying your "forever home." That makes me laugh. Sure, it's a more permanent home than one you're renting. But nobody lives in an earthly house forever. You're going to

eventually sell it... or your children will sell it for you. A diligent homeowner will care for their house, knowing it will one day end up in someone else's hands. Even if you lived in the same house for decades, you'll end up leaving it behind.

For all of us, there will be that one, final BIG MOVE. You're going to say goodbye to everything and everyone you've ever known. You'll put aside *this* house, your body, and enter into eternity. For some of you... that's a scary thought. On that day, will you be sure of where you'll end up? The only way you can be sure of your final destination, is if you put your faith in Jesus Christ, right now.

For the Christians here today, consider Titus' situation. It's not that much different than yours. For a time, you are at one place, doing one thing. There is something God wants to accomplish through you, while you're here. But your time in this season is temporary. You can easily miss what God has for you. What does God have for you, specifically? That's not for me to say! But God will show you. So, don't waste time on things that are only distractions. Worries about money; petty squabbles over things that will pass away; lusts that just wear you down. Instead, find out what God is saying to you and embrace that.

Walking with the Lord and serving him is the greatest thing you'll ever do. It's a high honor. We're not saved by what we do. We are saved by grace; and because we have his abundant grace (unearned favor), we are called to do great things for God.

What is done in faith by those who know the Lord Jesus Christ will last forever.

Right now, in whatever season you are in, God has something for you—to receive and to do.

And here is something: *you won't know when the season your currently in will end.* You don't know when someone will take your place. Titus did, thanks to this letter. We normally don't. Work in such a way that, when it's time that you move on, you have something good to leave behind.

Point 2: We aid our fellow laborers. (Titus 3:13–14)

Titus 3:13–14 (ESV) *Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.*

Paul continues to give Titus specific instructions in the next two verses. Titus is to expect two men to arrive on Crete. Apparently, they're passing through on their way to somewhere else.

- Nothing else is said about **Zenas** in the New Testament. He was a lawyer, that is all we know.
- **Apollos** should be a familiar name. He was a dynamic evangelist mentioned in Acts and 1 Corinthians. He was one of Paul's allies, a powerful preacher and teacher.

We can assume, both of these men worked closely with the apostle (they could have been the men who delivered this letter to Titus). Travel, back then, was slow and difficult. The stability of Rome made the roads safer. But you couldn't hop on a plane and, in a few hours, arrive halfway around the world. You had to get on a ship, which took you to one port. Then, you had to find another ship, which took you to another port. You may have to do that several times, ping-ponging your way across the empire, until you finally got to your destination. Anything could have happened to you along the way, as it did to Paul in Acts 27. It wasn't a fun way to travel.

Zenas and Apollos, then, had a lot to contend with. Paul was making sure that once they reached Crete, they could count on Titus to have something ready for them. But what would they need? Basic things like food, a warm bed, and perhaps even some money and supplies.

Notice he told Titus to *speed them on their way*. Don't let a lack of resources slow them down, Titus. These men had important work to do. Paul essentially gives Zenas and Apollos a blank check when he writes "see that they lack nothing." That meant,

Titus had to provide them with *anything* they might ask for; good thing he had a network of churches who could help, right? I mean, what if one of them asked for a wife!?

Paul is confident in Titus' loyalty and ability. No matter what the need, Titus would be able to provide it for these brothers. All for the sake of spreading the gospel and serving the church.

This brings us to our second point about serving the Lord with diligence. If you serve the Lord diligently, **we aid our fellow laborers.**

This is a responsibility for pastors *and* the local church. Not long ago, Pastor Tony gave us three important slogans for our church. Remember the first one? *This is not a restaurant, it is a family dinner.* Meaning, we all have a role in serving. And that often includes equipping our co-laborers.

Notice what Paul goes on to say in verse 14. He says "let our people" do this kind of thing. This is not just for Titus; not just for the elders. Everyone in the Church is called to do "good works," and help in cases of "urgent need." Paul encourages us that if we do this, we won't be "unfruitful." Meaning, good is going to come when we aid our brothers and sisters.

It takes many hard-working people to do what we do every week. These people devote time and energy to provide valuable ministry to all of us. Those of you who volunteer and give on a regular basis make this possible. We can't have VBS, women's and men's events, or even greet or give out bulletins, without your diligent support and involvement.

On top of that, our church believes in partnering with ministries who work locally and all over the world. We support people who carry the gospel to places we don't normally go. Some of these ministries, of course, host events for us to participate in the work, including missions trips! All of that takes money, time, and energy. Sometimes, that includes sacrifice. But that is what we are called to do. We are supposed to look out for those who are diligently serving the Lord (our own Zenases and Apolloses) and provide what we can to help them.

When I was in college, my school organized missions trips throughout the year. Students travelled across the globe, Africa, South America, Europe, Asia and so forth.

These were extremely valuable opportunities to serve growing churches that needed help.

We'd do whatever was asked of us. On some trips, students dug wells, led worship services, preached, or evangelized. Most of the time, we also provided a monetary gift to help the local church or missionaries.

Let me remind you that the people going on these trips were *college students*. Meaning, we didn't have any money! Just a plane ticket was out of our budgets, let alone everything else we had to pay for. But, these students gladly sacrificed what money they had, so they could equip faithful co-laborers--who often faced persecution for the name of Jesus.

I know one student who signed over his paychecks--for months--to cover the cost of his trip. Others raised funds, made phone calls to friends and family, all to serve the Lord and his people.

These kinds of sacrifices please the Lord. When we do this, we are saying to him, "Loving your people is more important to me than holding onto a few more dollars." There are many diligent workers who serve our church. Thank you for what you do. To the rest of us, let me ask: how are you equipping and aiding them? There are many ways to equip your co-laborers. Giving is a big one. Coming alongside them as a volunteer is another. Opening your home to host a small group is another good one. As Jesus said, even giving a cup of cold water to someone in need is necessary and rewarded.

Point 3: We put love and grace at the forefront (Titus 3:15)

After giving Titus these final instructions, he leaves him with these last words:

Titus 3:15 (ESV): *All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.*

As we've have seen, Titus had a lot to do. Perhaps his head was spinning. "I gotta do this, I gotta do that. I have to help this person, I have to stop this person." But, before he runs off to get started, Paul reminds Titus of what this is all about in his farewell line.

The church world is a busy place. There is so much to do. Titus had to travel across Crete, going from church to church, teaching, rebuking, equipping, praying, and so on. When problems arose, he had to deal with them. On top of this, he had to get tough with some really dangerous false teachers.

In the hustle and bustle of church life, it is very easy for us to lose sight of what matters most. Paul is closing his letter to remind Titus of why God called him to this important task in the first place. It's easy to gloss over a simple verse like this, but let's put ourselves in Titus' shoes. He on this island, far removed from his close friends and family. Paul is letting him know that brothers and sisters are thinking about him.

In Titus' mind he can probably see them talking to Paul as he wrote this letter. Smiling as they thought of Titus, praying for him and the churches on Crete. These thoughts would have warmed Titus' heart and kept him encouraged in the difficult moments to come.

Paul then tells Titus to share his greeting with all "who love us in the faith." You see, a church isn't just an "institution." It's not a business, university, or cold organization. We are a *family*. The church isn't this building or the services we put on. The church is made up of us--God's people. We are brothers and sisters. Why did Titus work so diligently, along with these churches? Why do we work so hard to serve each other? Because we love each other.

How do we serve God with diligence? *One, we leave something good behind. Two, aid our fellow laborers.* And our final point, we **put love and grace at the forefront.**

That's not some sappy, sentimental cliché. Working in church is hard. A lot is required of you. It can get demoralizing and frustrating. But we can't let the challenges and demands of dealing with life weigh us down. Or we can get burned out or bitter. I've seen many people lose their love to serve the Lord because things got hard. Some

walked away from ministry; others walked away from the faith entirely. The only way we avoid burnout is to make love and grace the priority. **To express God's love through acts of grace, in everything we do.**

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:14 that the love of Christ compelled him to serve the Church. He didn't go through all those persecutions because they were fun. Yes, he was looking forward to a heavenly reward. But he would not have endured so much agony, had he not loved the people he was serving. The same was true for Titus.

Here are two pieces of advice: never serve the church if you think you *have* to. Please, just don't. We don't need grumpy people handing out bulletins. If you don't have genuine love for your brothers, you need not apply.

The other thing is this: if you *don't* have a genuine love for God's people, spend more time with them. Get around your brothers and sisters, build friendships with them. Experience God's love through them; then you'll start to realize how special they are. Then, serving them will come naturally.

From a very early age, I had the privilege of witnessing the love of a church family. As a child, my family attended a warm and welcoming church. We didn't do small groups back then, but we were constantly over each other's houses for parties, BBQs, Bible studies, and so on. This was in New York, so the church body was made of people of many different ethnicities. I got the pleasure of making friends with kids from all backgrounds and walks of life. I learned at a very young age how important it was to be around the people of God.

There were times in my life when I suffered, because I didn't have the body of believers around me. And I've known of people who spent years detached from a local church. They thought they could get along without one; you know, they made excuses about how Christians are hypocrites and all that. But when they hit hard times, their family wasn't nearby, friends deserted them, and they didn't have fellow Christians ready to step in and help.

I know I've talked a lot about serving the church today. But just as important is *your* need for the local church to come alongside and help you. God so expertly designed the Church so that we need each other. We don't live in a bubble, isolated

from other people. God knows that we thrive best when we are around family. And there is no better family than God's family.

Some of you don't fully know what it's like to be in a loving, supportive family. You may have come out of a dysfunctional home; you might not have a lot of relatives to lean on. But you have another family, ready and eager to welcome you in. You have brothers and sisters who will support you, love you, encourage you--and at times correct you. And you don't have to do anything to deserve their love, because it comes from our heavenly Father through grace.

Paul ends the letter, as he ended most of his letters, with this beautiful sentence: Grace be with *you all*. Paul knew that he wasn't just writing to Titus, but to the other leaders and members of the churches at Crete.

And the Holy Spirit, who inspired Paul to write this letter, knew he was talking to all of us today. Grace is God's unearned favor, which he abundantly bestows on us. We don't earn God's love or acceptance. He is freely giving it to us, through Jesus Christ.

Serving God diligently is an honor. But it is only possible because of Jesus. He is the one who made this wonderful family, called the Church, by saving us from our sins through his own blood. Jesus Christ died on the cross so that all of us can be forgiven and welcomed into his family.

Anyone here today who has not yet joined God's family, you can by just believing in Jesus. Believe he died for your sins and rose again, ask him to come into your heart as your Lord and Savior. If you do that, you are immediately welcomed into a wonderful and eternal family.

Those of you who are already in God's family, be encouraged today. Because of God's grace, we get to diligently serve each other. Be on the lookout for new opportunities to support your brothers and sisters. Be eager, be excited to serve--no matter how big or small the task may be. And never forget, it is love and grace that bind us together, always. Amen.