

Living to Do  
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Titus 3:1-11

Opening: As a kid from time to time I would hear the statement that someone was not “*acting like a Christian.*” Their point was that person’s actions, behavior, or conduct didn’t square with what is expected of a follower of Christ. Think about the other meaning of the word “acting.” **Why is trying to “act” like a Christian a mistake? What could result from trying to “act” like a Christian? How could that approach even be an exercise in self-deception? What is the difference between good conduct and legalism?**

- Have you ever been on the website “wiki-How?” It’s a website dedicated to telling you (usually in cartoon-like illustrations) “*how to do anything.*”
- For grins I Googled “act like a Christian” and sure enough wiki-How had an article on ten ways to “*Act like a Christian in any Circumstance.*”
- “1. Love God above all else; 2. Have undying faith in God; 3. Love others as you love yourself; 4. Do good. You glorify God every time you do a good deed; 5. Follow the example and teachings of Jesus contained in the Bible; 6. Don’t judge others; 7. Read your Bible and pray every day; 8. Keep on giving God your “ALL”. That means give up your right to hate, sin willfully or get revenge. Set it right--if you can--but that is not revenge also remember to repent which means you see the wrong you’re doing and you quit doing it; 9. Tell everyone and be constantly remembering where God brought you from and what you are now; 10. Remember Jesus died for us.”<sup>1</sup> Some good things there but **what is missing from their list?**
- In our study of Titus chapter two Paul gave instructions on how the church members in Crete should move from correct doctrine (orthodoxy) to correct practice (orthopraxy.) Older members should be examples and instruct the younger, the pastor should be an example for the people, and all should be a Christ-like example to the world that is worth emulating.
- Now in Paul’s final instructions he focuses on how followers of Christ should live and behave in a pagan world.
- Paul didn’t give a list of “dos and don’ts” saying, “do your best.” He taught that the only way we can display right conduct and be “ready for every good work” is if we’ve experienced “the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit,” in a phrase: salvation by grace not works.

Big Idea: Followers of Christ are to live in a way that draws people to Jesus but we don’t have to try to “act” like a Christian. If we’ve been saved our behavior will be different because the Holy Spirit has changed our hearts. We’re not perfect, but changed.

- In John 17 in His high priestly prayer, Jesus prayed to the Father:

“<sup>14</sup> I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup> I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.” John 17:14–18 (ESV)

- We are not taken to heaven immediately when we are saved because God’s plan for Christ-followers is to be “salt and light” in the world (Mt.5).
- In this text Paul paints a picture of how a Christian should live in the world.

**3** Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, <sup>2</sup> to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

- Be submissive and obedient to rulers and authorities. Romans 13 gives the full teaching on this. God puts government in place and Christians are to obey the laws of our land even if we disagree with the leaders.
- **When is “civil disobedience” appropriate for a believer? Can you think of biblical examples of civil disobedience?**
- In these verses Paul describes the ideal behavior for a follower of Christ: “...*always ready to do what is good.* <sup>2</sup> *They must not slander anyone and must avoid quarreling. Instead, they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone.*”<sup>ii</sup> Isn’t that a church worth joining? Wouldn’t you love a neighbor like that? A family like that? Wouldn’t we want to BE like that?
- If we’ve been saved, the Holy Spirit can enable us to live this way.
- If I’ve trusted Christ for salvation, I’m not who I should be yet, but thank God I’m different than I was! Paul contrasts the old versus the new.

**3** For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

- Because of God’s forgiveness we don’t have to feel guilty about how we were before Christ, but it can be productive to marvel at the difference He’s made. We can sing that old hymn: “*What a wonderful change in my life has been wrought since Jesus came into my heart!*”<sup>iii</sup>
- This side of Heaven we will sometimes slide back into our sinful nature and need to ask for forgiveness, but Paul explained “HOW” sinners like us CAN display the Christ-like conduct verses one and two describe.

**4** But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that

being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

- Paul put some important theological truths into plain language. Here is what happens when we trust Christ as Savior and Lord:
- *“He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.”*<sup>iv</sup> That is regeneration. Not patched up but born again!
- *“He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior.”*<sup>v</sup> That is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts!
- *“Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.”*<sup>vi</sup> We call that justification: I am guilty of sin but God has chosen to look at me as innocent because I’m covered by the righteousness of Christ. That makes me an heir!
- God the Father took my sins and placed them on Jesus’ side of the ledger and took Jesus’ righteousness and placed it on my side of the ledger. We call that imputation, aka “The Great Exchange.”
- [In] *“his kindness and love, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.”*<sup>vii</sup> That’s salvation by grace and not by good works! (Illustration: A former Catholic talks to a nun.)
- In these verses Paul gave a complete picture of salvation by grace through faith. The change in our heart makes verse eight possible:

<sup>8</sup> The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.

- We are not saved by good works but saved FOR good works.
- We can hold each other accountable (insist on these things) because the Holy Spirit living in us causes *“anyone who belongs to Christ [to] become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”* (2 Cor. 5:17)<sup>viii</sup>

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NLT) tells us, <sup>18</sup> So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

Galatians 5:16 (ESV) Commands us, <sup>16</sup> But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

- Here’s final discussion question: The Holy Spirit enables us to live a Christ-like life and do good works, but we’re not robots. **What is our responsibility? How do we tap into the Holy Spirit’s power?**

Ephesians 4:21–24 (NLT) commands us, <sup>21</sup> Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, <sup>22</sup> throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception.

<sup>23</sup> Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. <sup>24</sup> Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

- One last instruction to Titus for these churches dealt with those troublemakers who wanted to divide the church over non-essentials:  
<sup>9</sup> But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. <sup>10</sup> As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, <sup>11</sup> knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Aren't you glad we don't have to "act" like Christians? No one can!
- Though I'm saved, my first instinct is not to "*do what is good, not slander anyone, avoid quarreling, be gentle, [or] show true humility to everyone.*"<sup>ix</sup> I'm not a good enough actor to ACT that way!
- Trying to keep up that façade creates unbelievable pressure, stress, guilt, and shame. The good news is God never expected us to "act" like a Christian and that's why salvation is about changing us on the inside.
- If we leave here today grateful for anything we can be grateful that "[w]hen God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy."<sup>x</sup>
- He didn't change us only for our own good. He changed us to DO GOOD.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.wikihow.com/Act-Like-a-Christian-in-Any-Circumstance> [Note what is missing from this list is confess, repent, and trust in Christ as Savior and Lord!]

<sup>ii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Tt 3:1–2). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>iii</sup> [https://hymnary.org/text/what\\_a\\_wonderful\\_change\\_in\\_my\\_life\\_has](https://hymnary.org/text/what_a_wonderful_change_in_my_life_has)

<sup>iv</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Tt 3:5). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>v</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Tt 3:6). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>vi</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Tt 3:7). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>vii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Tt 3:4–5). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>viii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (2 Co 5:17). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>ix</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Tt 3:1–2). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>x</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Tt 3:4–5). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.