

Text: Titus 3:8-11

Title: Careful to Do Good

Truth: We must constantly review what God’s grace teaches us.

Date/Location: Sunday September 5, 2021 at FBC

Introduction

We are coming to the end of Paul’s letter to Titus. The minister’s little instruction book closes with some key admonitions to him—and the church—about doing good and avoiding evil works and people.

I. Maintain Good Works, v. 8

- A. Faithful saying: this is a formula that refers to a spiritual truth that is certain and accurate to the truth of God. It may well be a pre-existing saying that Paul affirms by way putting it into his letter so that it gets the imprimatur of being God-breathed. Does it refer to the saying that just came before, or what is about to be said? This formula in general can point in either direction, but here likely back to verses 5-7.
- B. Affirm constantly. Titus is to stress or insist on these truths, both verses 5-7, and all the things that have been given up to this point in the letter. Always review, go over again, introduce to new believers, etc. Let’s face the reality that we sometimes have trouble remembering what we learned last week, much less the entirety of God’s truth that we have learned over years and years. We need constant review. That’s the only way to really learn something.
- C. The intention of Titus’s teaching these faithful truths repeatedly is that believers in God should be intent on doing good works. The idea of being “intent on” is to give serious mental effort and concern to the matter. “How can I do good in my life situation? How can I help others?”
- D. This is good and profitable for people. God intends that believers should live so that they are useful and good to other people. We live here to serve God and serve others with good. Contrast the quality of such a life—good and profitable—to the unprofitable and useless nature of foolish talk in verse 9.

II. Avoid Foolishness, v. 9

A. The word “avoid” occurs at the end of the phrase, emphasizing it. It means to shun or “go around” in such a way as to avoid the thing. If you were a Jew in the time of Christ, you would likely “avoid” or “go around” Samaria due to prejudice. 2 Timothy 2:16 teaches Christians to avoid worldly and empty chatter. I think on this count, many of us have had more than our share of fails, including myself.

B. There are four items that are to be avoided like the plague:

1. Foolish disputes. There is obviously a judgment call to be made as to when something is a *necessary* dispute, and when something is foolish. In Acts 15:2, 7 there was a necessary dispute and more church leaders joined in to figure it out. But once it was determined that Gentiles do not need to be circumcised or keep the Law of Moses, forever after that, disputing it over again is foolish. We take the Spirit-directed answer and leave it at that. 1 Timothy 6:3-5 reminds us that there are people who delight in this kind of quarreling.
2. Genealogies. See 1 Timothy 1:4. Nothing is wrong with knowing your family history. But being obsessed with it is not permissible to the Christian. Your genealogical record does nothing for you spiritually. It cannot get you into heaven and it cannot keep you out. It cannot bring you into favor with God and it cannot keep you out of that favor. The Old Testament priesthood was concerned with genealogies for qualification to serve. Today, every believer is a priest before God, in that small p-priest sense that we can pray and enjoy unfettered access to God. Being knowledgeable about your tribal connection was thought to be very important. But it is not so in Christ because in Him there is not even Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female. Those characteristics are real and consequential, but not in terms of being right with God.
3. Contentions, or strife, discord, rivalry. 1 Cor. 3:3 indicates that being involved in such things is a mark of the flesh, not of the Spirit.

4. Strivings about the Law. This is one sub-category of the more general “foolish disputes” and the example above covers this as well. The Law of Moses is not even operational today. The days and months and years and festivals and sacrifices are *out*. No Christian is obligated to them. Any strife about it is stupid because demanding to keep it is not even a topic of legitimate debate. When Paul wrote, the altar was probably still functioning in Jerusalem. People could offer sacrifice and make vows, and even Paul himself did so. But quarreling about the Law is way out of place. Drop it!

C. The reason to shun such things? They are unprofitable and useless. Those two words clear. There is no advantage, no benefit, no fruit, no power, no help in engaging in the aforementioned controversies. They are devoid of value. And since we have limited time on this earth, and are told to redeem the time, it is not a redeeming use of the time to do these activities. We need to do things that are beneficial. There are many such things we can figure out to do. All the time we spend striving and foolishly disputing is time lost to serve Christ acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

III. Reject a Divisive Person, v. 10-11

A. What does *divisive* mean? It describes a person who tries to start and sustain a faction, that is, to get loyalty from a group of people who believe some heretical doctrine or practice and who make it a point to spread it and campaign for it and criticize others for not believing it, etc. The faction group perhaps looks down on the others with some level of disdain or pity that they are not so enlightened. An us-vs.-them mentality pervades the group rather than a uniting mentality. The group itself and its actions are divisive.

There were divisions in the Corinthian church that elicited the Apostle Paul’s response in the early chapters of 1 Corinthians. Those things came up again throughout the letter. Proverbs 6:12-15 describes a troublemaker who sows discord. God hates those who divide brothers (Prov. 6:19). This is a general proverbial statement, so it applies in two areas at least: God hates those who

divide families, since families are made up of “brothers” in the familial sense. And God hates those who divide churches, since churches are made up of “brothers” in the spiritual sense. Larger tribal or national units also are applicable here. People who try to divide a nation along various lines to stir up strife to their own political advantage fall into this category. Nothing good comes from such divisions, and God hates them.

Not all divisions are bad, if they are for a good reason. People who gather around the truth will be approved by God (1 Cor. 11:19).

- B. Pre-condition: We must give adequate admonition before moving away from a factious person. The apostle says two warnings are all that is needed. The main people involved must be told to knock it off, and then given a little space to see if they will do so. Then a second time they must be told. If they do not comply then, it is time to act.

Someone must give this rebuke. That difficult job usually falls to the pastor(s) because others do not want to confront the divisive man themselves! And that is appropriate in a church situation. The pastors must protect the flock and be able to deal with the hard things in the church. They are the shepherds, after all. But the church should be visibly and audibly united with the pastor(s) in their duties. When the church *together* pronounces a disciplinary judgment on a divider, that lightens the load on the pastor’s shoulders, makes for an encouraged pastor, strengthens the church and is a good response to the division. See Matthew 18:15-17 and 2 Thess. 3:14-15 for more on this matter of church discipline.

But what if the situation is in your extended family? Well, then, Mr. Husband, you have a job to do.

- C. Why reject a divisive person? This seems too harsh to modern sensibilities. But it is not. First, division over petty or unimportant matters, or because of false teaching, is damaging to the church regardless of the person causing the division. Keep this in mind: division and unity are themselves important doctrines of the church. They must be weighed against the matter at hand. As an obvious example, if a strife arises about the gospel, say how

someone is saved, orthodoxy must prevail and those who are stirring up trouble should be removed. But if the division is over some minor point of church operations or some detailed point of eschatology, then the doctrine of church unity must prevail. Sometimes, people in the church will not get what they want!

But the apostle Paul gives us a further explanation. He explains that we can take this rejecting action because we know the person is warped, sinning, and self-condemned. They are perverted, they are living in sin, and they are condemning themselves. They are “auto-judged.” Do not be cowed by such a person appealing to a Biblical principle like “You cannot judge me!” *They* are judging *themselves* by their actions. Unrepentant persistence in such a state indicates that they are not truly following Christ and need to be addressed with great seriousness before they do even more damage to the church, family, society, etc.

- D. The action: reject. This word, again, comes last in the Greek phrase of verse 10—thus it is emphasized. Someone who is like this—reject them! Parallels are found in 1 Timothy 4:7 and 2 Timothy 2:23. Since it is also in Titus, we get a clue that God is very serious about avoiding damage to the church and not wasting time with such people. Those things do not produce godliness and instead produce quarrels. There is no place for that in the church. To *reject* means to decline, refuse, avoid, not accept, spurn, etc. After the pre-conditions are met, you can be certain that you are not losing anything by rejecting the person, and in fact you are only gaining peace and quiet and time for useful activities and righteousness.

You may have had a related experience before. You are disciplining a child for rebellious behavior or are involved in an ugly church situation. The person you are working with is being dumb. But then *you* yourself feel badly, guilty and “should I be doing this?” and “what if I am wrong” and such. Of course, we who are spiritual must always take heed to ourselves. But if someone is behaving badly, *they* are guilty for that, not *you*!

The thing is that if you do *not* reject the person, you will be distracted and upset and wasting time. I had people criticize me for the Hebrew Roots Movement messages that I taught. I just had to

turn off the comments on the videos and leave it behind. It is a waste of time to go over the same territory repeatedly with someone who is trying to divide up the church and has not gotten with the program of Acts 15 from 2000 years ago.

E. About being divisive...don't be that guy! Make sure you are not being zealous for a foolish cause.

Conclusion

So, how to summarize all this? Keep focused on good works; avoid bad works; turn away from people who are involved in divisive behavior. The grace of God teaches us these virtues—yes, it is a grace of God to remove divisiveness from the church and turn away from foolish talk and maintain good works.

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