

Lesson 17 – Titus 3:9-15
Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School
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Introduction

The Apostle Paul has exhorted Titus to “set in order what remains”. Titus’ first task was to appoint elders in every city. Those that would be appointed elders had to exhibit a level of maturity as exhibited in character qualifications. These are also character qualities that we all should be avoiding/pursuing as those who desire to glorify God by progressing in sanctification. Paul then looks at the relationships of the mature believer: those that contradict, older men, older women, younger women, younger men, and employees (slaves) and the motivation for pursuing excellence in these relationships. Paul’s focus then turns to the lifestyle witness of the mature believer beginning with how we live among pagans. He then provides the motivation for a lifestyle witness by showing our unsaved past, providing a sweeping description of our glorious salvation, and showing that the true believer has been changed. Today we will conclude the book of Titus.

Relationships of the Mature Believer (3:9-15)

“But” contrasts that which is good and profitable for men (v8) to that which is unprofitable and worthless.

⁸This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.

A. The Bad – Avoid Unprofitable Conversation (3:9)

⁹But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

Avoid [periistemi] literally means to stand around. The word can also mean to turn oneself about or to be a "bystander". The figurative meaning is to turn oneself about for the purpose of avoiding something. This figurative use pictures one actually going around something in order to avoid it.

The present imperative calls for a continual action. The charge is to shun these things, deliberately and habitually avoiding them.

Paul lists 4 things Titus (and every believer) is to avoid. Each of these nouns lacks the definite article in the Greek which stresses the quality of these things (as opposed to a specific controversy that may have arisen).

1. ... foolish controversies and ...

Foolish [moros] is always used as term of reproach meaning mentally dull, sluggish, stupid, or moronic.

Controversies [zetesis] indicates philosophical inquiry. The most common meaning refers to the exchange of words for the purpose of disputing or engaging in contentious, controversial questions. It denotes the preoccupation with pseudo-intellectual theorizing. It pictures one engaging in debates rather than the carrying out of a genuine search for information.

Paul uses “zetesis” in his other pastoral epistles as well.

³As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, ⁴nor to pay attention to **myths and endless genealogies**, which give rise to mere **speculation** rather than *furthering* the administration of God which is by faith. ⁵But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, ⁷**wanting to be teachers of the Law**, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions. 1 Tim 1:3-7

³If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, ⁴he is conceited *and* understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in **controversial questions** and **disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, ⁵and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth**, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. 1 Tim 6:3-5

²²Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. ²³But refuse foolish and ignorant **speculations**, knowing that **they produce quarrels**. 2 Tim 2:22-23

The Scriptures are authoritative and constitute the believer’s only source of faith and practice (Matt 5:18; 2 Tim 3:15-17; Heb 4:12; 2 Pet 1:20-21). Only Scripture is perfectly adequate for all matters of faith and conduct – for salvation and sanctification. Only Scripture is able to meet all the spiritual needs of God’s people. Scripture is all-sufficient in regards to the soul of man, in our relationship to God, and in our relationship to others. It is the supreme and final authority in all matters on which it speaks (2 Pet 1:3; Matt 4:4; Heb 4:12; 2 Tim 3:15-17; 1 Pet 2:2; Psa 19:7-13; 119:9, 11; 119:24).

What the Bible teaches is true and that ends the discussion. What the Bible does not teach should not be speculated on. Some examples of foolish controversies are origins theories, theories of supposed problems with Scripture’s origins, alternate theories of God’s sovereignty, changes in the salvation doctrines, deliverance theology, King James only controversy, the Bible code, etc.

2. ... genealogies and ...

Genealogies literally refers to accounts of an ancestry. These genealogies were probably more than a family's genealogical record. Some commentators suggest that they were subjected to a highly symbolic interpretive scheme. Names, dates, and places supposedly contained hidden meanings which became the basis for esoteric doctrines. Paul may be referring to the many fanciful interpretations of genealogies which could easily degenerate into controversial speculation and strife.

3. ... strife and ...

Strife [eris] means contention, wrangling, quarrels. It is a general term that carries the idea of all kinds of self-centered rivalry and contentiousness about the truth. It refers to persistent contention, bickering, petty disagreement, and enmity. It is produced by a deep desire to prevail over others, to gain the highest prestige, prominence, and recognition possible. It is characterized by self-indulgence and egoism.

Strife is the consequence of foolish controversies and disputes over words.

³If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, ⁴he is conceited *and* understands nothing; but **he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife**, abusive language, evil suspicions, ⁵and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. 1 Tim 6:3-5

4. ... disputes about the Law ...

Disputes [mache] literally refers to physical combat or a contest fought with weapons. All the NT uses are figurative and in the plural referring to battles fought with words not weapons.

These word fights are over the Law of Moses presumably as it relates to Christians.

Christians are not under the Mosaic Law because Christ is the end of the Law to everyone who believes.

⁴For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Rom 10:4

Christians are not under the Mosaic Law because they have died to the Law.

⁶But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter. Rom 7:6

Christians are not under the Mosaic Law because of the New Covenant.

⁴Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. ⁵Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, ⁶who also made us adequate *as* servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 2 Cor 3:4-6

Christians are not under the Mosaic Law because of the change in the priesthood.

¹²For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of Law also. Heb 7:12

Christians are not under the Mosaic Law because Paul taught that he was not under the Law.

²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; 1 Cor 9:20

These four things (foolish controversies, genealogies, strife, and disputes about the Law) are unprofitable and worthless. Because they are unprofitable and worthless, we are commanded to avoid them.

Unprofitable [anopheles] means serving no purpose. It describes that which does not offer any special benefit and thus is without advantage, is useless and is unprofitable.

Worthless [mataios] means vain, empty, devoid of force, lacking in content, nonproductive, useless, dead, fruitless, aimless, of no real or lasting value.

Paul's instruction is to refuse to enter into false teachers' dialogue (see 1 Tim 4:7; 6:20).

²⁰O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, **avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge”**— 1 Tim 6:10

⁷But **have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women**. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; 1 Tim 4:7

B. The Bad – Avoid Factious People (3:10-11)

¹⁰Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, ¹¹knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.

Factious [hairesikos] describes a person who is able to choose, which came to mean one who is schismatic, contentious or divisive. This person chooses for himself and takes a certain position on a given issue: doctrine, standard of behavior, etc. In secular Greek there is no inherently evil meaning suggested, but simply a marked difference from a standard teaching.

It is “known” that this man is perverted and sinning. Factiousness is a sin. This is not just taking a position against God's word and His undershepherds, but it is moving others in the same direction.

Perverted [ekstrepho] means to turn out of a place, as for a tree or post from the earth, to turn inside out as a garment. Figuratively it means a change for the worse.

²⁰But you did not learn Christ in this way, ²¹if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, ²²that, **in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,** ²³and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Eph 4:20-24

Self-condemned [autokatakritos] means condemned by one's own decision; a person who shows by his own actions that he is wrong or guilty.

Factious individuals (those who do not submit to the Word or church leaders) should be confronted individually. This is a common theme throughout the NT and is a specific application of the practice of church discipline.

¹⁷Now I urge you, brethren, **keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.** ¹⁸For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. Rom 16:17-18

⁶Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that **you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.** ... ¹⁴**If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.** ¹⁵*Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.* 2 Thess 3:6, 14-15

⁹I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; ¹⁰*I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world.* ¹¹But actually, I wrote to you **not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.** 1 Cor 5:9-11

What is to be done to a factious person? They are to be rejected.

Church Discipline

¹⁵If your brother sins, **go and show him his fault in private**; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶But if he does not listen *to you*, **take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED.** ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, **tell it to the church**; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, **let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.** Matt 18:15-17

The process for church discipline is presented by God in Matt 18:15-17.

Step 1 – Personal contact

Step 2 – Group contact

Step 3 – Church contact

Step 4 – Non-contact

The purpose of church discipline:

1. Restoration of the sinning brother/sister (Matt 18:15)
2. Protect the purity of the Body (1 Cor 5:1-13)

What sins should be church disciplined?

1. The sin must be willful

¹⁴We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 1 Thess 5:14

2. The sin must be an action expressly forbidden

⁷But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God *sees* not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” 1 Sam 16:7

⁹I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; ¹⁰I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. ¹¹But actually, I wrote to you **not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.** 1 Cor 5:9-11

C. The Good (3:12-15)

¹²When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. ¹³Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them. ¹⁴Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful. ¹⁵All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in *the* faith. Grace be with you all. Titus 3:12-15

The focus of these four verses is on faithful fellow believers. Paul had decided to spend the winter at Nicopolis and wanted Titus to meet him there. But, Paul could not leave a local church without a qualified elder, under-shepherd.

Artemas – Nothing is known about him, except that he must have been a mature, fellow servant.

Tychicus – He is mentioned several times in the NT

²¹But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, **the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord**, will make everything known to you. Eph 6:21

⁷As to all my affairs, Tychicus, **our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord**, will bring you information. Col 4:7

Zenas the lawyer – Nothing is known about him, however, to travel with the Apostle Paul means that he was also mature, fellow servant who was sold out for the sake of the gospel

Apollos – He was a bold proclaimer of the truth.

²⁴Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. ²⁵This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; ²⁶and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ²⁷And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, ²⁸for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. Acts 18:24-27

Paul was a real man in a real world with real colleagues and friends that he had regular contact with and care for. Titus was directed to “diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them”. These men were on ministers of the gospel who needed the help of fellow believers to continue their work. Titus was to help them.

Titus also had an opportunity to bring the church on Crete together to serve the universal body of Christ by meeting pressing needs. God did not design His church for the elders to do everything. The Pareto principle (80-20 rule) should not apply to the body of Christ.

¹¹And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. Eph 4:11-13

¹⁰As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 1 Pet 4:10

Failure to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs is unfruitfulness.