

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

These notes are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at [pastorpat@waukeshabible.org](mailto:pastorpat@waukeshabible.org).

**Date:** August 12, 2018

**Sermon Title:** Jesus Works

Sermon Series: Titus

Text: Titus 3:9-15

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Text: Titus 3:9-15  
Emphasis: The JESUS SEED always produces GOSPEL FRUIT and this looks and feels like working hard at pulling people in, treating them as family, and receiving them as they are.

### **Introduction:**

It is always with an element of surprise when we come to the end of a particular book of the Bible in our study of His Word. Yet, if we have handled the Word correctly we have heard the Holy Spirit. Paul calls Titus to stay in Crete in order to correct false teaching thus putting the church in order. We walk away hearing the idea that “The JESUS SEED always produces GOSPEL FRUIT.” The two cannot be separated and/or reversed. The order must be followed. Together they form the gospel.

Often you have heard me say I do not believe we are to “try harder to do better.” Such thinking infused into the vertical is damnable. However, how does this work on the horizontal? Listen carefully to this idea in the following promotional.

“In his book *Always Forward*, Bill Wooditch particularly emphasized the importance of doing your best and going after your personal and professional goals with pinpoint focus. A peak-performance business training coach and a skillful motivational keynote speaker, Bill Wooditch inspires and invigorates audiences to do their best. You can book him for your next event and watch him work his magic!”<sup>1</sup>

I am not picking on Bill Wooditch. He only serves as an example, there are a million life coaches and motivational speakers who are going to help you live your best life now. I think this thinking is fine, but it is not biblical. This is marketing, its capitalism, and it’s a survival of the fittest mindset. A particular problem we have is the interplay between two realms. There is the realm of the Christian and that of the consumer. One speaks to the capitalist and the other to the Christian. Although these two worlds co-exist, they are not necessarily compatible. Our final paragraph tells us to “do our best” and to “devote ourselves to good works.” What this text says in context and what we make it say culturally are really two very different ideas.

Our society calls us to be our best self now. Our Savior calls us to be who we are in Him to others. The one focuses on self; the other focuses on others. The one looks for the moment while the other lives in the mundane. The one is spectacular and sensational whereas the other is often unimpressive and all things being equal predictable in so far that nothing will change.

Yet the one lives out the radical nature of the gospel in the most mundane and routine moments of life. The gospel calls us to love our enemies and to pray for those who spitefully use us. The gospel calls us to pull people in, treat them as family, and receive them as they are without manipulation or motive.

This is the radical transformation of the gospel and this is how Paul ends his Letter to Titus while serving in Crete.

Paul leaves Titus with the following exhortation.

### Outline - Author's Structure:

#### I. Our Challenge (vv. 9-11 "But avoid")

- <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" (Titus 3:9-11).

Notice the contrast with our text from v. 8. Teaching justification by grace through faith in Christ and its resultant and inevitable fruit is profitable. This is the message of 1:1-4; 2:11-14; and 3:4-8. Teaching anything else is unprofitable. One is helpful and the other is useless. The useless we are to avoid. Paul uses the word "unfruitful" in verse 14. Here, it is used as a synonym for unprofitable.

The words of Paul are abrupt and straightforward. They tie directly to the preceding passage.

Avoid - Paul uses the same word in 2 Tim. 2:16.

- <sup>14</sup> "Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. <sup>15</sup> Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. <sup>16</sup> **But avoid worldly and empty chatter**, for it will lead to further ungodliness, <sup>17</sup> and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, <sup>18</sup> men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:14-18).

What does it mean "to avoid?" Our passage suggests two actions. **First**, avoid teaching/tolerating such deviant ideas. Anything that takes away from the JESUS SEED and/or GOSPEL FRUIT is to be avoided. **Second**, having nothing more to do with those who would teach otherwise. What to do seems clear. How to carry this out practically is a little more problematic. What are we to avoid? Two things are noted.

#### A. Avoid deviant teaching (v. 9)

I am assuming that the deviant teaching is contrary to the teaching stated throughout Titus.

"'Questions' and 'genealogies' the Apostle characterizes them as 'foolish,' because they were of an utterly unpractical nature, and consumed time and powers which were needed for other and better things. The "contentions" were disputes and wranglings which arose out of arguments advanced by different teachers upon the 'questions' and 'genealogies.' The 'strivings about the law' were, most probably, arguments suggested by disputed and intricate points connected with

the law of Moses. In the Talmud we possess unnumbered instances of all these strange and curious inquiries about which men then gravely disputed and wrangled, but none of which could in any way teach men how to make life more beautiful and loving, more like that fair pattern which St. Paul's Master loved."<sup>2</sup>

This same descriptive appears in 1:10.

I would like to explore this idea a little more in another study, but for now let us recognize that there is deviant teaching and it is to be avoided.

Not only are we to avoid deviant teaching, but we are also challenged to reject divisive teachers.

#### B. Reject divisive teachers (vv. 10, 11)

I would assume the teachers avoided are those who are teaching these deviant ideas. These infiltrators are described in 1:10-16. A problem within the church is the wholesale and widespread acceptance of deviant teaching and divisive teachers. They are identified as heretics. They have been graciously confronted and have refused correction. Part of the problem is that these heretical teachers are *in the church*. They disguise themselves as *angels of light*. Paul says they are *among the flock*. John says they were *in the church, but did not stay or abide*. That is the problem.

I must confess, I have a terrible time in almost all Christian bookstores because most Christian books are teaching "How to have your best life now" theology, which is part of the problem in Crete. Books that sell are books promoting self-help, self-improving ideology. Books that grapple with the biblical text are far and few because no one wants to spend the time wrestling with the text and then submitting themselves to that text regardless of how it makes them feel or if it does or does not improve their life.

The blatant and obvious are not hard to identify. It is those cloaked as angels of light that are problematic. They look like Christians, but their theology is deviant and the result is divisive.

From this very negative statement comes a strong positive.

#### II. Our Calling (vv. 12-14 "Devote themselves to good works")

- <sup>12</sup>"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. <sup>13</sup>Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. <sup>14</sup>And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful" (Titus 3:12-14).

Paul notes two things.

#### A. Do your best (vv. 12, 13)

Our ESV Bibles translate two siblings with the same idea, "Do your best."

v. 12 **spoudazo**; “to use speed, to make effort, be prompt or earnest.”

v. 13 **spoudaios**; “earnestly, promptly, diligently, instantly.”

Both words are embedded in the same family, two siblings with common parents.

Do your best to live gospel rich lives. What this looks like in real time is an ordered approach to ministering to one another. Perhaps the simplest way of stating this is, “Love one another.”

“Although it is possible the term νομικός (nomikos) indicates an expert in Jewish religious law here, according to L&N 33.338 and 56.37 it is more probable that Zenas was a specialist in civil law.”<sup>3</sup>

Paul needs help and he makes his plea that Zenas and Apollos would come quickly.

What I love about this is its simplicity. I do not think those mentioned are exceptional. I think they are ordinary folk in need of assistance. The assistance is, likewise, not exceptional.

This idea of helping and loving is furthered in verse 14.

#### B. Devote yourself (v. 14)

The words used for “learn to maintain” are **manthano** and **proistemi**. The word for “learn” is pretty straight forward. The word for “maintain [i.e. devote]” occurs eight times in the New Testament, all by the apostle Paul; twice outside of the pastorals (Rom. 12:8; 1 Thess. 5:12) and the rest inside of the pastorals (1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 12; 5:17; Titus 3:8, 14).

This thought of maintaining is one of oversight, ruling, of control, or manage. These two ideas of doing one’s best and devoting oneself are actually the same. The good work is ministering to the needs of your brothers and sisters in the church. Learn to keep this area active.

Why the admonition and exhortation? Because the older we get and the longer we persist, we slowly begin to become curmudgeons. The slip and slide into troll-dom is almost imperceptible, but it is a real threat. Perhaps it is only me, but the longer I live inside of the Christian world, the more cynical I become. If we do not actively seek to love people, we end up loving just ourselves. Our circle becomes increasingly smaller. And the only antidote I know to this imploding is the gospel.

Remember, the problem in Crete created disorder and chaos. The solution was to put in play elders who held to the simple truth that one’s profess of faith results in one’s practice in life. We have attempted to discuss this thoroughly. You cannot profess to know Christ on one hand and deny Him by your works on the other. The fruit does not establish the root. The fruit is always the result of the root.

Paul tells us what the JESUS SEED looks like. What is this GOSPEL FRUIT we have seen throughout Titus? Friends, GOSPEL FRUIT is nothing more or less than the FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT. Listen carefully to the language of verse 15.

### III. Our Comfort (v. 15 “Greet, love, faith, grace”)

- <sup>15</sup>“All who are with me send **greetings** to you. **Greet** those who **love** us in the **faith**. **Grace** be with you all” (Titus 3:15).

Paul uses three words to describe what a gospel rich church “feels” like.

#### A. Greet **aspazomai**, “To enfold in the arms.”

The idea is that of pulling another in. Our tendency is to push people away. This text calls us to pull people in. The gathering of God’s people is to be a place of pulling in, of comfort.

The contrast of our text shows its tension. In verses 10 and 11 we are rejecting/pushing away. Here, we are pulling in and accepting. Who we push away and who we pull in is in the text. Thus, it is possible to be a gospel rich, grace celebrating fellowship and still carry out church discipline where some might have to be removed. Notice the next thing in our text.

#### B. Love / faith – **phileo**, it is the love one has for friends and siblings.

The gospel creates family. This text tells us that a consequence of the JESUS SEED is the gospel fruit of creating family.

This text tells me that as I pull people in I am to treat them as family. Perhaps, you might think this is a problem because what you know of family is combative and divisive. But Paul would have us think otherwise. We are brothers and sisters. For many of you, the church is the only family you have. This is proper and right. The last thing noted is grace.

#### C. Grace – **charis** / what is this grace spoken of? It is to love without condition, to accept without requirement, to forgive without limit, to favor/bless without merit/works, and to serve without reward. All of this and more is grace.

**The gospel enables me to accept people as they are and not for what I can imagine them to be.** This text tells me that the gospel so radically changes me that I act contrary to my birth nature and rebirths me according to my new nature. The gospel does this. Normally, we gravitate toward people that are just like us. And normally, we have a distorted opinion of ourselves. Seldom do we gravitate toward those who are struggling or in need. Why? Because they take so much time. They are an inconvenience. Yet, those are the very people we are to pull in, treat as family, and receive as they are.

The gospel of Jesus Christ radically transforms us into something we could never imagine or create. The gospel enables us to extend comfort to others. We can pull people in as they are and call them family. It does not require or demand that they be perfect.

This is the good work. This is the exceptional, the sacrificial, and the supernatural. This is what we are to do our best at and devote ourselves to. It is all saying the same thing. To pull people in, to treat them as family, and to receive them as they are and not for what we imagine them to be is the powerful outcome of the JESUS SEED. This is GOSPEL FRUIT.

One thing that is both my asset and my liability is that I do not put myself on a pedestal of self-importance. Part of my transparency is that you get to see and experience me in all of my failure. I accept from God my role as Pastor of this church, but I am no different than you are except in my function. An aspect of my role is to pull you in, to call you my brother and sister, and to love you as Christ loves His church. But I am also just like you in that I need to be pulled in, I need to be reminded that I am your brother, and that you love me as I am, not for what I will become.

This is what we are and this is what we must protect internally and promote externally. Folks, JESUS WORKS. We must avoid all teaching and teachers who would deviate and divide us from this.

### **Does It Really Matter?**

1. You and I as a believing community must guard against deviating from the MAIN THING or dividing over secondary matters.
2. You and I as a believing community must work hard at pulling people in, treating them as family, and receiving them as they are. Why? Because this is the GOSPEL FRUIT from the JESUS SEED.
3. This deficiency in Crete was pulling the church apart. By calling the church back to the gospel, it was consistently moving from chaos to cosmos.
4. We must remember the corrective to dysfunction is not good work, but the gospel. Why? Because the gospel intrinsically causes the good work.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://billwooditch.com/best-really-mean/>

<sup>2</sup> Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers on Titus 3:9.

<sup>3</sup> <https://net.bible.org/#!/bible/Titus+3:9>