

Foundation of the sermon

Purpose

Teaching to accentuate learning good things and avoid heresy.

Principle Idea:

Admonish the heretic and teach people to concentrate on works that are beneficial.

Type of Outline

Exposition of Titus 3:8-15

I. Introduction

This week we will look at the concluding thoughts in the book of Titus.

8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

9 But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.

10 A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;

11 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

12 When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter.

13 Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.

14 And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.

15 All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

II. Body

A. Accentuate the Positive: (verses 8, 12-15)

This section of Titus begins with the phrase "This is a faithful saying." The Pulpit Commentary states concerning the four occurrences of this phrase in Scripture: "... The first is I Tim. 1:15, 'That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' The second is I Tim. 4:8,9, 'This is a faithful saying Godliness is profitable unto all things.' The third is II Tim 2:11-13, 'It is a faithful saying, If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him.' The fourth is our text ..." Each of these statements give us a key to understanding Christian life: 1) The I Timothy 1 passage tells us the purpose of Christ's ministry - save sinners; 2) the I Timothy 4 passage tells us that, living in a godly manner has benefits; 3) the II Timothy passage tells us that if we continue in our Christian walk throughout life -- eternal life is our reward, and 4) This passage reflects on verses 4-7 as the "faithful saying."

It acts as a bridge from the thoughts concerning the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit that brought about our salvation and our own "good works." He asserts that the results of the changed lifestyle of the saved must be demonstrated in the "maintaining" good works. Paul has in the previous passage strongly asserting that our works can not provide salvation, now he states that they are a necessary result of a changed life. Now that you are saved -- do good works.

1. Believers must be careful to maintain good works - (8,14)

Christianity is less about your outward religious acts than it is about what you do in private for God and for your fellow man. The basic sense of "good works" as used in this passage is the excellent, beautiful nature of them. These works have moral value. They aren't works for works sake. The nature of the works isn't just that they are benevolent acts toward others but they are done for the correct reasons. It speaks to the holy nature of the Christian life that God wants for the saved.

The command to be "careful to maintain" these works is a little more difficult define. The careful nature speaks to the diligent nature of the labor involved and concern you use to pick the right ones and to perform them.

To maintain good works and show the careful concern necessary to select and perform them is opposed to the "unprofitable and vain" works that Paul goes on to discuss in verse 9. These works are "... for "necessary uses and are not unfruitful" according to verse 14.

These works are ones which are indispensable -- you must do them. They are the right thing to do for the situation that presents itself. They are wrapped in the moral correctness of the particular act itself. A holy person is driven to perform these acts because they are "necessary."

The ability to "maintain good works" is not something that we have ingrained in our human nature. It is a learned experience. It is not learned by dry book learning. This type of learning involves the person performing the act of a "good work." It is learned by thoughtful consideration of the "good work," and the experience gained through performing it. It's basic sense is to learn by "directing one's mind to something" according to Kittel. It involves an intellectual process --

2. Diligently support the ministry (12,13, 15)

The Apostle begins to close the epistle by talking about his co-workers. He requests that Titus diligently come to him in verse 12, in verse 13 he tells the Titus and his churches to be diligently to send Zenas and Apollos on their way. He tells them to send them forward on their way. This is a way Paul uses here to tell the churches to give them support. They are to be left in want for nothing.

These passages tell Titus and the churches to be eager in their support -- do it quickly -- do it with the proper desire. Paul of course addresses the topic of giving cheerfully in II Corinthians 9:7. He also advocates the support of the minister in I Timothy 5:18.

The work of the ministry does require some monetary support. The churches often send pastors to conference, or pastor's conference in this day and age. I occasionally get support for preaching funerals or on other occasions. This is not a plea for the pastors and ministers to live in the lap of luxury. They are to be helped in their duty as ministers. This is Scriptural.

In verse 15 I see a thank you for the non-monetary moral support and love the people had shed upon Paul as a minister of the gospel. It is important to know that you pray for your pastor, that you consider him in his duties. Paul knew this was necessary -- so he returns the love and concern to his people.

B. Avoid the negative: (9 - 11)

Paul not only deals with positive instructions for living the Christian life, but also says to live a holy life the Christian must avoid the negative characteristics that are dangers to the Christian.

The word avoid here comes from two Greek words meaning to "stand around." It means to hold one's self aloof. The idea is that you keep yourself from becoming involved. It is enticing to become a participant in a discussion. We want to make ourselves heard, to straighten someone out. We want to discuss, engage, we want to assert our intelligence our prowess in thinking. It is human. Paul states that there are some arguments and discussions we should stand aloof from, one's we should not enter, some in which we should not participate.

This command is a present imperative indicating continuing action -- we should habitually and continuously avoid these types of discussions. Inherent in this command is the idea that this is something you should do on your own behalf. You avoid these arguments constantly for your own good.

1. Avoid useless arguments (9a-d): a. Foolish questions Questions (9a)

These were questions that Paul described as "stupid, or foolish" It comes from the Greek word we get "moron." These are the same types of questions Paul cautioned against in II Timothy 2:23 when he said: "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes."

In Scripture in the Old Testament there is a man Nabal which comes from the Hebrew meaning senseless -- He was indeed a senseless fellow. It is the Greek word that is used here that the LXX uses for the word nabal in Isaiah 32:6.

These questions have no value and only morons would discuss them. I think late night sitting around with groups at religious meetings I have heard and maybe mistakenly participated in some moronic discussions -- Paul says constantly avoid these types of questions.

The word for questions here is used seven times in Scripture. John's disciples argue about Jewish purification rites and baptism in John 3:25; In Acts 15:2 some Judaizers came and argued with Paul and Barnabas about the benefits of circumcision; In Acts 15:7 the questions about Gentile circumcision was raised again at the first church conference; Paul in Acts 25 uses the fact that contention was caused by the Jews concerning his teaching concerning Christ in his defense in court; In I Timothy 6:4 the discussion is about false teachers using unsound reasoning dealing and debating about words; and the other two times this word for questioning or debate are the Titus passage we are looking at and in the II Timothy passage mentioned earlier.

The main point is that within each of these passages these debates and questions engendered strife and contention. Most of the concern minor theological matters not discussions about vital topics. These things divert the discussion away from the important topics about doctrines.

I want to make sure you understand since some of these discussions were important to the presentation of the Gospel to the world -- the first church conference -- the ministry of Paul and Barnabas -- and the defense of Paul before the court of law -- some discussions are not vain. Also this is not an indictment against doctrinal standards, nor making stands for the truth. It is clearly an indictment against narrowly focusing on matters of no real importance.

b. Genealogies (9b)

I love to do genealogy. Occasionally I get on the web or go down to the historical department at the state or county level to work on my genealogy chart. I find it interesting it tells me a little about myself. The arguments that Paul is talking about genealogy is a little different.

According to Wiersbe: "... clearly the genealogies were not treated primarily as historical documents, but according to some commentators they were subjected to a highly symbolic interpretive scheme. Names, dates and places supposedly contained hidden meanings which became the basis for esoteric doctrines."

This was sort of like the Kabbalist practice that some Christians today have taken on these days interpreting Scripture with a mathematical scheme. Sort of a form of alchemy. These names and dates had mystical meanings to these people. They would argue about foolishness. These arguments were found in their meaningless gnostic interpretation of genealogies.

Of course there was probably an element of "my dad can beat up your dad" childishness in these arguments. You know like "my great-great-grandpa was second in command under king David and yours was only a peasant." Or "my family is the family of rabbi's and yours were pig farmer's" this gave them some sense of superiority.

I sometimes get that sense from some SDBs of "old" SDB families. Fortunately I know of no one that has that issue in our congregation. I also don't know of anyone in our church that has gone into the ditch of numerology. This is a good thing -- but it is a danger -- this is why Paul warns against these arguments about nothing.

c. Contentions and Strivings about the law (9c-d)

These discussions often dealt with rites, rituals, ceremonies, and the conflicting decisions of various rabbis concerning these matters. One only has to spend a short time in the Talmud to see the matters about which Paul was telling the churches and Christians to avoid.

I once knew a group of people who claimed to "keep the festivals" and during the Unleavened Bread festivals they had a discussion on whether such things as "pop-corn" or "shaving cream" were leavened and therefore should be banished from someone's household during the festival season.

In doing this they ignored the important implications of Scriptural commands. Christ discussed some aspect of Judaism that was similar in Matthew. In Matthew 23:23 He says: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

Stay away from maximizing on the minimum. Pay heed to the important matters and stay away from those that issues that are not that important.

2. Reason to Avoid useless arguments. (9e)

The discussions of the questions, genealogies, and contentions about the law discussed in the first part of the verse are now called unprofitable and vain.

a. Unprofitable

The Greek word used here is only used here and in Hebrews 7 verse 18. In Hebrews it is used to describe the nature of the command that the high priest be a member of the the family of Aaron as weak and unprofitable. These discussions are without value.

b. Vain

These discussions are bankrupt -- they are futile -- they are weak -- avoid them

3. Practice church discipline based on Scripture. (10)

Some people today would indicate that someone who is contentious about minor matters ought to be tolerated -- welcomed into the church with open arms.

But here the Scripture calls these people heretics. It tells us first to try and correct their thinking. But after a second chance to kick them out -- get rid of the heretic. False, heretical, cultish doctrine is infectious. It causes division and strife.

I saw one church torn apart when a lady determined to take on a practice that was in direct opposition to the solid teaching in the church. Other women got involved and began to participate. This issue rose to a great contention. Eventually the church had to admonish this person to stop teaching others to follow this practice. Later the lady moved away and the church thankfully was able to avoid the painful decision to remove her from the fellowship. The point being is that they would have done this if she hadn't left on her own.

Get them out -- it is important to the health of the church. Do it in an orderly fashion -- do it with love -- document the procedure in the church bylaws but do it. It is important not only for the person themselves but for the church. Don't let heresy infect the church. Stop it -- remove it get rid of it.

Here the Scripture gives specific steps - admonish -- if you have to do it a second time -- get them out.

it tells us to:

- a. Admonish the wicked.
- b. Kick out the heretic.

It tells us that such a person is perverted in their doctrinal teaching. It further tells us that their own words condemn them.

III. Conclusion

Today we have learned to Maximize the positive, and avoid and reject the negative in our Christian walk. We must diligently pursue doing "good works" that are necessary. We must eagerly support the ministry. We must avoid meaningless and useless debates about non-important issues.

When false teachers come into the church that involve themselves in such discussions and arguments attempt to correct their thinking. If they don't listen to reason kick them out. It is important to the health of the church.

In our Christian walk we must avoid the negative and accentuate the positive attributes of holiness in our personal lives, and in our church lives.

Title: Avoid the Negative and Accentuate the Positive