

Message #12

Titus 3:8-15

In the mid 1800's one of the most prominent cities in the entire world was Vienna, Austria. It was a city making worldwide contributions. 1) Musically, Johann Strauss was offering the world a feast of waltzes. 2) Academically, the city was a drawing card for many serious students. 3) Medically, this city featured one of the great medical institutions in the world.

But around 1840, something went wrong. Women would go into the hospital to have a baby and one out of six women having the babies died. No one could figure out why. The dead women were taken to an autopsy room to try and determine the cause of their death, but no one could resolve it. That is until Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis took charge.

Dr. Semmelweis was put in charge of the maternity ward in 1844. He carefully watched and monitored everything going on and he noticed that the same doctors and students who were trying to figure out why the women died through autopsies were the ones delivering the babies.

He kept track of everything they did and he noticed that when they came out of the autopsy room they did not wash their hands. In 1847, he made a rule that before any examination a doctor must scrub his hands and when they did that, the death stopped.

Can you imagine something as simple as washing hands prevented thousands of deaths? If they could have only seen that earlier, think of the deaths that could have been prevented.

There are many churches who are dead because they have overlooked something very simple. The tragic reality is most don't even recognize the problem. Churches want to be relevant in a wild world and they don't know what to do to become more relevant. They invent things like:

- 1) We need better contemporary music.
- 2) We need more entertainment.
- 3) We need to put in better lights.
- 4) We need more advertising.
- 5) We need more evangelism.
- 6) We need more visitations.
- 7) We need more programs.

The real solution to the problem is so simple. **The church needs to be a reverent place of worship where people can come to hear the Word of God.** What people need to hear when they go to church is a careful, systematic exposition of God's Word. In fact, I offer this text as evidence. How many times have we gone through a book like Titus at church and specifically through these verses? **These are verses put here by God for the purpose of making the church impacting in a wild world.**

This is the finale of God's message to the island of Crete. Paul wanted to drive home a final point:

IN THE WILD WORLD IN WHICH YOU LIVE, DEDICATE YOURSELF TO CAREFULLY AND ACCURATELY UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING GOD’S WORD AND AVOID DISCUSSIONS WITH RELIGIOUS PEOPLE WHO DON’T EMBRACE TRUTH.

Many take the position that to reach a wild world we need to tolerate all religions and let all people have their say. Paul says you have nothing to do with them. If people don’t want the truth, avoid them.

Now there are four final messages Paul gives to Titus:

MESSAGE #1 – Confidently challenge believers to engage in good works. 3:8

When Paul says this is a trustworthy statement, he is informing Titus that he gave very careful consideration to the subject and he wanted Titus to stress to the people of God the importance of being “careful to engage in good deeds.” The verb “be careful” means we are to give careful thought and consideration to what we are doing. We need to devote ourselves in life to doing that which is good.

Now this particular challenge is aimed at “those who have believed” in Jesus Christ, which is the only way one may be right with God. The assumption of the challenge is that this is not an automatic given. Just because one has believed on Jesus Christ does not automatically mean he/she will involve self in good things. On an island like Crete, he could involve himself in bad things, just like in our world.

God wants His people “engaged” in things He classifies as good. That word “engage” means to preside over oneself and govern oneself by directing and maintaining good integrity in life and work (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 381).

Now the adjective “good” stresses external things that God’s people do that people can see. God wants His people doing things that people see as good and right and honorable (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 229). God wants His people to demonstrate that they are good, honorable people who do what is right. They are to be good employees, good citizens and good neighbors.

Isn’t that interesting? Paul does not challenge believers to do something spectacular or glamorous. He says just quietly demonstrate you are a serious-minded person who is good and honorable. Give careful thought to what you are doing and saying in life.

Paul says the reason is because this is good and profitable for people to see. It is advantageous for people to look at believers and see that they are good, honorable people of integrity. We are to let our lights shine for people to see.

Now if we track some of the things that Paul has said in Titus, we know that there are some things that this world needs to see:

- 1) It needs to see a church that is reverent.
- 2) It needs to see older men who have godly, reverent character.
- 3) It needs to see older women who are reverent and not gossips.
- 4) It needs to see younger women who love their husbands and children and take care of home.
- 5) It needs to see young men who are sensible.
- 6) It needs to see employees who work hard for their employers.
- 7) It needs to see people who submit to authority.

When the world looks at God's people and sees these qualities, it does make a statement.

MESSAGE #2 – Specifically challenge believers to avoid unbiblical religious discussions. **3:9**

Titus is a book that stresses the importance of sound teaching and sound doctrine (1:1-2, 9, 13-14; 2:1, 15). God wants the Scriptures very carefully taught in His church in a world gone wild.

On a free-wheeling island like Crete, many believed it was healthy to allow everyone to give their viewpoints on subjects of religion. Their view was just let people come to church and say what they want and believe what they want. Paul said, not in God's church. Paul says that is dangerous. He said if you want a church God will bless, you carefully guard against theological discussions that are not Biblically sound and true.

There were all kinds of religious people on the island of Crete and there were many Jewish religious teachers and leaders on the island (Titus 1:14). These teachers had developed imaginary genealogies, ordinances, man-made traditions and rules that were not true to the Word of God. These religious people had their own beliefs and convictions that were not Biblical.

Paul says you need to be on the lookout for people like that and avoid discussions with people like that. **He specifically says avoid "foolish" religious talk (the Greek word *moros*, from which we get our English word "moronic").** There are people who come to church who want to debate and argue against what is true and Paul says you "avoid" them. Paul says there are three reasons to avoid them:

Reason #1 - These people want to discuss things to argue, not learn.

Understand this point. Those with false religious viewpoints are not interested in truth. Mormons are not interested in truth; they want to argue. Muslims are not interested in truth; they want to fight and argue. Christian Science is not interested in truth; it wants to argue against truth.

Reason #2 - These people are discussing things that are unprofitable.

This particular word means there is nothing about these discussions that is advantageous in any way. There is nothing helpful about religious things not true to God's Word (*Ibid.*, p. 330).

Reason #3 - These people are discussing things that are worthless.

The word means these discussions are totally and completely useless. They have no purpose to them (*Ibid.*, p. 280).

In other words, these kinds of discussions are a total waste of time and God does not want His people having them. There are people who love to talk religion. They will run down every religious "rabbit trail" and every "doctrinal quirky path" they can find, no matter how absurd.

The charge from Paul is "avoid" discussions with these people. They are foolish. Literally they are moronic.

MESSAGE #3 – Specifically challenge believers to reject a factious man after two warnings.
3:10-11

Paul says even though the church is to exist in a free-for-all world, it is not to be a free-for-all church. Not all people are to be continually welcomed and loved. Some people are to be rejected.

Now the cry of most churches is that we need to do everything we can to welcome all people. God's Word says there are some people we need to reject. We don't want them to stay in the church. You don't tolerate them; you don't debate with them; you reject them.

That word reject means you refuse to have anything to do with him. You avoid him and you get away from him (*Ibid.*, p. 340). In other words, you refuse him and you exclude him.

The word "factious" means this man is a heretic who follows his own opinions and beliefs even if they are contrary to the Word of God (*Ibid.*, p. 13). Actually, the word carries with it the idea of a man who chooses himself or appoints himself and he propagates his convictions and opinions that are not true to God's Word. There are lots of people like that.

When someone comes into the church and begins to propagate something that is not true to the Word of God, he must be confronted with the truth. He must be told that his view is not Biblical and it will not be tolerated. You give him a couple of chances. You don't initially write him off. There is grace in this. However, if he persists, you reject him and get him out.

Reason #1 - This kind of man is perverted. **3:11a**

That is an odd Greek word. It means to be completely turned inside out (*Ibid.*, p. 142). A perverted person is completely twisted in their thinking. They are just the opposite of what God would have them be, do and say.

Reason #2 - This kind of man is sinning. **3:11b**

People who believe and promote false doctrine are not just confused, they are continually sinning. They think they are continually right with their free thinking; God says they are continually sinning. They don't want to be taught the truth. God says that is sin.

Reason #3 - This kind of man is self-condemned. **3:11c**

This type of person condemns himself by his constant rejection of truth.

MESSAGE #4 – Paul gives his final message to Titus. **3:12-15**

Most named here are behind scenes guys that we know little about. But they are forever remembered for their faithfulness to God and to Paul. Paul trusted these guys.

In **verse 12**, Paul tells Titus that when he sends Artemas or Tychicus to Titus, he wanted Titus to join him in Nicopolis where he would spend the winter.

We don't know anything about Artemas. This is the only reference to him. From his name we guess him to be a Gentile. He obviously was well-taught by Paul and completely trusted by Paul.

Tychicus was a trusted carrier of Pauline letters. He carried Paul's letter to the Colossians (Col. 4:7). He carried Paul's letter to the Ephesians (Eph. 6:21). Both of these men were trained by Paul and able to expound his letters.

Paul was going to Nicopolis to winter and he wanted Titus to join him there. Nicopolis was a city on the west coast of Greece. It was located 350-400 miles N.W. of Crete and about 100-120 miles northwest of Corinth. Nicopolis was like a winter resort area. Some have suggested that eventually Paul was arrested here and taken to Rome for execution. But he did spend some time in a nice resort area prior to that happening.

In **verse 13**, Paul asks Titus to help Zenas and Apollos. Zenas was a lawyer very skilled in legal matters. He was a smart lawyer, not for reasons one might think. He was smart because he loved the Lord and he was dedicated to Paul and his teaching. As a lawyer, he knew Paul was proclaiming truth.

Apollos was a great orator who had been saved under the ministry of Paul and was greatly helped by Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:24-26). These were two very successful men who had given up careers to serve Jesus Christ. Paul wanted them helped and supported.

In **verse 14**, Paul says our people must “learn” to engage in good works. This is something that is learned. The “our people” referred to people on the island of Crete who were part of the church. People need to learn to demonstrate what is good in a wild, unruly island. The world promotes a self-centered mentality; Paul says we need to be other-oriented. We need to help people with “pressing needs.” When we help people with “pressing needs,” God takes notice of that and we see to it that we will be fruitful.

The final **verse 15** is interesting. All who were with Paul greeted Titus, but Titus was only to greet those who loved them in the grace, faith system. Paul could care less whether the world was greeted by him; but he very much wanted to greet those who loved him and his grace message.

Again, the church that will make a difference in a wild and unruly world is a church that is sound and reverent. It stands for something and stands against certain people and things.

Well we must wonder if Titus ever made it to see Paul. Apparently he did. In II Timothy 4:10, Paul says he sent Titus to Dalmatia, which is about 200 miles north of Nicopolis and about 300-400 miles from Crete.

One historian said that after Titus left Dalmatia, he went back to Crete and died at the age of 94 in the city of Heraklion.

What we have seen in this book is that God wants us to reflect His grace to a wild world. He wants us to be a church that is reverent and serious about Him and His Word. He wants us pure in doctrine and life. We are not to be pushovers who tolerate anything. We are to be a church that defends His truth and reflects His grace.