

Titus 24-07-14b

Let's pick up our study now. We're looking at the introduction to Titus and its emphasis on teaching the truth, communicating the truth, passing the truth on to others who can also represent it and defend it from error. There is an equal emphasis, especially here in Titus, on refuting those who are perpetrating error.

And this is something that has become less popular in the modern day. People think it's discourteous or disrespectful to disagree with someone and especially not to disagree with them publicly in some cases. But there is strong, stark language in these epistles, and especially here in Titus, condemning, calling out false teachers.

And one of the commentaries I have says, Paul exposes these false teachers for what they truly are. This is no detached disinterested description. This is deep hearted, full bore warning in the strongest terms.

Though the opponents claim to teach and act Christianly, Paul describes them as rebellious, empty talking deceivers who are greedy, impure, detestable, disobedient, and worthless for any good deed. When Paul sees false teaching threatening the church, he does not beat around the bush or content himself with mild generalities. Rather, he clearly and plainly calls it like it is.

And you find this not only here in the pastorals, but throughout Paul's career, even back in Acts chapter 13, verse 9 through 12. Remember Simon the sorcerer who wants to pay for the ability to heal and offer money for it. Saul, who is also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? Now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.

Immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord. Beyond measure at the teaching of the Lord, the truth of the Lord Jesus.

But when somebody tried to pervert and distort the truth, Paul calls it out. And Paul knows what blindness is like. That was one of the things that converted him on the Damascus road, was losing his sight.

You have another reminder of this in Galatians chapter 1, verses 6-10. I marvel that you are turning away so soon from him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel, which is not another. It's not really a gospel at all.

But there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ, the truth,

the good news of the Lord Jesus. Even if we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

The truth is important. It is central. It is foundational.

It is essential. You can't get anywhere without it. You can't do anything fruitful without it.

It is what connects us to the vine, as the branches. To abide in the Lord Jesus is to abide in his teaching, in his truth, in his word. That is love for God expressed.

If we love him, we have his word and we keep it. And he will love us in return. I saw something sobering in the stream of stuff that people post in social media from a pastor who wants to encourage people as believers.

And he basically reposted something that someone had put online and said, you know, this is the truth, deal with it with several exclamation points. And it was, God loves everybody and we are to love everybody. Now think about this.

God loves everybody equally, is what it said. God loves everyone equally and we should love everyone equally. Is that truth? You won't find very many people who will argue with it, but I will argue with it on the basis of the exhortation I have from the word of God to point out error and false teaching.

And to say that God loves everyone is false. Oh, John 3.16, it doesn't say God loves everyone. And it certainly doesn't say God loves everyone equally.

God loves you for who you are is an extension of this. It is blatant falsehood. God does not love everyone the same.

We're in John chapter eight, just turn a few pages forward to John chapter 14 and 15. Look at John 14, verse 23. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word and what? My father will love him.

Now, if God loves everyone equally to a full extent, why would Jesus say this? This is a conditional love from the father. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my father will love him. What is the flip side of that coin? If anyone doesn't love me, doesn't have my word and keep it, my father will not love him.

Not this kind of love. There are kinds of love. There is love for neighbor.

It's not the same as love one another. There is love that places a healthy distance on purpose. There is love that is cordial.

There is love that is for tax collectors and sinners and is self-preserving and actually is

the best thing you can do for someone in many cases is to put them out where God can deal with them and you don't muddy the water. But for someone to be a seminary-trained pastor and to say God loves everyone equally and to put it out and teach it to others, it is the devil's own lie. People need to know that there is wrath from heaven that is going to fall.

I mean, read Romans chapter 1. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven. That is not love. Wrath is not love.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against those who do what? Who don't love each other enough? Those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Those who receive the truth, accept the truth, have the truth and keep it, God loves. Those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against them.

And this is not, oh, this really grieves me, this hurts me more than it hurts you, kind of paddling a child when they disobey. This is the wrath of God that destroys, that sends into eternal fire, that annihilates and obliterates never to return. This is what's going to happen to the devil and his angels.

And if you want to call that love, you can redefine the word to your own desires, but it's not God's truth. You suppress the truth in unrighteousness. God loves everybody equally.

Why does scripture say, Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated? And this is God talking in the first person. Does God love Esau equally as he loves Jacob? Well, what do you mean by love? And in practical terms, the policy of God toward Esau and his descendants in Edom is dictated by Esau's rejection of God's truth and God's covenant, the responsibilities of the firstborn. He is Isaac's firstborn and he does not treasure, does not value, isn't interested in God and the things of God, sells his birthright for a mess of pottage.

And Jacob, I love, Esau, I hate. Why? The decisions you make, the choices you perpetrate, your response, your reaction determines what God can do and what God will do on his own terms, by his own will and policy. God will love the Jacobs of the world and God is going to hate the Esau's of the world.

And Esau is a believer. He believes in God. He wants God's blessing belatedly and he misses out, bad choices.

He actually does get a sort of leftovers, warm up what you find in the fridge, cold peas blessing, but Jacob inherits the blessings, the opportunities, the privileges and the responsibilities of the firstborn because he chooses God. You think of him at Bethel, you think of him in the household of Laban, you think of him coming back down and his ongoing, he's not perfect by a long shot, but he constantly seeks God. He honors God

and God blesses him.

He is Israel and the father of the nation and the people, Jacob, Israel, not Esau who had first crack at it and tossed it aside. God does not love everyone equally. And it is horrific to make such a claim as someone who purports to be a representative of God's truth.

And we who are enjoined to represent the truth and communicate the truth are also enjoined to call out false teaching and error, expose it, identify it, warn against it. And that's what we're doing here. So as you look at the introduction to Titus, what does it take to defend the truth, communicate the truth, call out falsehood and error? It requires leadership.

There are those who are the perimeter security for the family of God. And these are pastors and teachers. There is not only provision on the positive side of teaching, but there is protection from negative false teaching.

Those who try to insinuate and ambiguate what they think is true, what they would like to be true, what they wish was true, what they've convinced themselves is true, but it is not God's truth. So Titus, my true son in our common faith, notice the definition of the relationship between Paul and Titus, fellow workers is common faith. He doesn't say, I love you like a brother.

You were so loyal and worked so hard. The definition, the foundation of this relationship is common faith. Common belief in God's truth.

I left you in Crete for this reason, that you should set in order things that are lacking and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you. He gives the qualifications here, which we'll review, but look at verse nine, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught. The purpose for finding these qualified men of demonstrated character, faithful service, known inside and outside the church as men of character and good reputation, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

Exhort on the positive side and convict, expose, call out those who contradict. Why? Verse 10, there are many insubordinate, idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, especially the religious kind, especially those who claim insight into the scriptures. I'm of the circumcision.

We're people of the book. We have Abraham as our father. We have the law of Moses as our guide.

We're experts in it. We'll tell you how to relate to God. Covenant with God is through circumcision.

We're defined by it. And they are especially insubordinate, especially talking idly, talking

about things that aren't central and aren't true and aren't proper idle talkers and deceivers. They are misleading.

They are telling people that the Bible says something, that the word of God says something, that God wants and expects something. And it's a lie, especially those of the circumcision. This is tragic.

Those who ought to know better are the worst offenders, whose mouths must be stopped. You have to know what they're saying and call it out for falsehood. You've got to stop their mouths.

Stop the spread of pleasant myths and fables, deceptive teachings that don't represent God's truth. They subvert whole households. It's not a matter of just a person here and a person there.

Entire households. And remember, church is met in households. This means whole church groups can be led astray by these people who by smooth and flattering words are deceiving people.

They mislead and subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, saying things they shouldn't say, giving explanations and supports that aren't proper and aren't right and aren't scriptural and aren't doctrinal for the sake of dishonest gain. In some way, shape, or form, there is feedback of a positive nature. I am respected.

I am listened to. I'm well thought of. This is gain.

I have a reputation. People talk about me. People invite me to come and speak or come and eat at their table.

And they think well of me and they want to honor me. There is some sort of gain. It might even be monetary.

Take up a love offering and pay the guy for bringing us this wonderful message. Buy his book. Get his tape.

Get his CD. Get his DVD. Take his series.

Get his little discipleship course and have the whole church go through it in the modern day. In some way, shape, or form, there is positive feedback to the person doing this. They don't have an honest and sincere belief that this is true and they need to teach it.

There is other motivation and any motivation other than knowing and teaching God's truth because it is God's truth and it is the only thing that pleases God and honors Him and helps believers grow in grace and knowledge to love the Lord Jesus, to have His Word and keep it. If there's any other motivation, if there's any other gratification that comes, and it can come in any form, just being well thought of. There are people who

have what one of those teachers I was talking about earlier used to call approbation lust.

I love being approved. I love being admired or I love people being grateful for me and my wonderful personality or my wonderful approach or the good stories I tell or some other thing that I represent. In some way, in some form, there is a gratification that comes back in the direction of the speaker.

That is dishonest gain. Honest gain is what John says in his epistles when he says, I have no greater joy than to see that my children walk in truth. That's John's gratification.

That's an honest blessing for someone to communicate and see that God's truth is doing God's work in the hands of God's Spirit and God's people are growing and being blessed and being fruitful. They have it. They keep it.

They're applying it. That's a wonderful gratification. Any other gratification is dishonest gain.

It doesn't have to be money, not by a long shot. So we should be people of the truth. We should defend it.

If someone tries to pervert it, distort it, communicate it inside our walls, amongst our family, in our church, which hasn't happened to my knowledge, but we are people of truth. It defines us. Someone who rejects that truth, someone who perverts and distorts or tries to change it, tries to make it into something that it's not, tries to make Christianity or understanding the Word of God into something that it is not, that needs to be identified and called out.

And we speak this truth in love to one another. We're not getting up on a high horse and enjoying sharpshooting other people. It's not about the people.

It is about the truth and the danger of deceit and falsehood. This is a danger. This is like poison in the pot.

There's death in the pot. What people are going to go and partake of for nourishment will kill them. And falsehood spread in the church is deadly.

People have a way that seems right and it's deadly. They believe because other people all repeat it and there are prominent Christians who teach it and publish it and reinforce it. And well, it must be right.

Look at how many people say it and believe it and practice it and follow it. And it is deadly because you are disconnected from the Lord Jesus and his words, all of his words. This is why Paul emphasizes this and he is going to return to this again.

Chapter 2. As for you, Titus, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine. Older men need to be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in the faith, in love, and patience.

Notice love is in there.

Love in its proper place is essential. It's one of the three great virtues in Christian walk and experience. Faith, hope, and love.

Love is the measure. Love is important, but love has to come from the place God sources it. The love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit.

And love comes from truth, having the word and keeping it. We love God, God loves us, and God's love is then shed abroad through us. But you can't subtract out God's love and the centrality of having the words of the Lord Jesus and keeping them.

If love is coming from some other place, it's sentiment, it's emotion, it's wishful, it's got an imaginary basis, just like a bad marriage. It can't last if it doesn't have the proper foundation. So, sound in the faith, reverent, temperate.

Older women likewise. Notice in verse 9, exhort bond servants. This is Titus 2.9. Bond servants should be obedient to their own masters.

He doesn't say, when you join our church, you've got to free your slaves. Bond servants be obedient to their own masters, well-pleasing in all, not backtalking, not answering back, hey, aren't we brothers in Christ? Why are you keeping me in slavery? Not answering back, recognizing the authority of the master, not pilfering, but showing all good faithfulness, all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. Isn't it something? The slaves are in the best position to adorn, to decorate, to enhance, to put a beautiful frame around what? The love of God, the doctrine of God.

And all of us have areas of service, and in our service, we should be cheerful, we should be faithful, not answering back, not grumbling and complaining, not bad-mouthing, not groaning, not rolling our eyes, well-pleasing in all things, to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. Isn't this a wonderful goal, day by day, hour by hour, that we, in whatever our responsibilities, whatever our opportunities, would adorn? It's not that doctrine is an adornment on us. We don't wear it like an it's not a cross around our neck.

We are the adornment. The central issue is the doctrine of God. This has to be our focus.

We value it. We prize it. And you should be proud, each and every one of you that has spent months and years valuing the Word of God, faithfully exposing yourself, coming to church, listening to recordings, reading books, reviewing your notes.

Never be ashamed of Bible doctrine. God is not ashamed of it. The Lord Jesus says, you can't love Him unless you have it and keep it.

So every hour you've spent, all of the time and focus and attention that you have devoted to it, you are adorning that doctrine. And this pleases God. This is central to our

faith.

This is where our strength comes from. And this is where our love comes from. It doesn't end with knowledge that puffs up.

That knowledge moves forward into love that builds up. But you cannot have love without truth. You cannot have a fruitful life without the Word of God.

It has to come first. It is essential. And it interprets itself.

You can't slice it up and take pieces of it that you like. Good parents don't let their children scoot the peas to one side and just eat the macaroni and cheese that they like. Peas are on the plate for a reason.

You need your green vegetables. You don't get to skip. You don't get to set aside the main course and just eat the dessert.

Parents know or should know what is good for small children to eat. They put it on their plate and they say, eat that. Well, I don't like okra.

I don't like liver. I don't like lima beans. I am your parent.

That food has been prepared. I know it's good for you. You're going to eat it, like it, and ask for more.

We don't let children pick and choose what they eat. God doesn't let His children pick and choose. Well, I like this part here.

I like this love stuff. I don't like judgment. I don't like rejection.

I don't like God's love being conditional on acceptance, repentance, acknowledging the truth instead of suppressing it. I don't like that part. So those peas are going right off the edge of the plate.

No lima beans for me. We do not have that authority. And one of the reasons Paul is going to emphasize authority here with Titus as he does in Timothy is they go hand in hand, recognizing the authority of the teaching and the role of the teacher.

Those who rule well are apt to teach, and they are worthy of double honor, not payment as so many like to pay your pastor. It is pay special attention because they who labor in preaching and teaching the word are your source for everything else that happens. All of the spiritual gifts are fueled by truth, not by love.

They're not fueled by hope. They're fueled by truth. God, the Holy Spirit, uses the truth to activate and implement your spiritual gift.

Love that is necessary, love will follow, love will be guided, love will be aimed effectively

by truth. But you cannot jump to the end result. You can't try to exercise your gift.

You can't be a preacher or a teacher if you don't have truth. And none of the other gifts function. You can't wash the feet of the saints effectively if you don't know how and when to do it and when to refrain.

There is as much of what we do not do as what we do, but we're defined by the truth. So important. And the fact that you are here this morning, the fact that you have listened to the faithful teaching of the word of God across years, and in some cases decades, is right and proper, nothing to be ashamed of.

People that want to disavow, you know, well I used to be in thus and such a church. To the extent that we learned and grew under however much truth was communicated, it might have been leavened, it might have been interspersed, there might have been problems, there might have been a split or a division. Okay, fine.

But the truth. Don't throw the truth over because the vessel was cracked. Paul says we have this treasure in earthen vessels.

You don't throw the treasure out with the broken pot. Remember the treasure. Value that.

God used whatever humble means, just as he's doing now, to bring his truth. And the truth is what we value. The truth is what we cling to.

Lash yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, his words. We overcome the world. This is the victory that overcomes the world.

Our faith and the merit of faith is in its object, and the object is God's truth. However you get it, by whatever humble means it comes, the truth is the issue. Well, this is sort of a thematic introduction to Titus, and understanding this emphasis and this focus, both the positive side of exhortation and the negative side of warning against falsehood, this is the double theme of Titus.

And this is what we'll see as we go through the book. But we'll close for this morning in a word of prayer. Father, we are so grateful that you not only ask us to be faithful, to be obedient, but you have given us the means.

You have given each of us the presence of your Holy Spirit. You have made available to each one of us your truth, represented fully and embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the scriptures that we have before us. We pray that as we reflect on these truths and look at our individual opportunities, challenges, circumstances, that the Holy Spirit will bring that truth to bear and shine that light on our path so that we walk with a firm tread, we travel the narrow road on that upward incline to the straight gate that leads to life.

And having passed through that gate in the ages that are to come, we will be fruitful and useful, thoroughly equipped for every good work now and in those times to come. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.