

Set in order – Sermon 16 – An ID of Importance – Titus 3:9-15

Intro:

1) Word picture – Driver’s license

- a. Little card doesn’t look like much – but it carries a lot of weight
 - i. Tell you:
 1. Who I am
 2. What I look like
 3. Where I’m from
 4. Whether I’m authorized to drive
 - b. If I get pulled over – the officer is not going to ask for my opinion, excuses, intentions
 - i. He is going to ask for my identification
 - ii. Why? – because the card reveals what’s true about me
 1. Not what I claim, but who I actually am

2) In the closing verses of Titus, Paul is issuing some spiritual ID cards

- a. He is instructing Titus on certain people he will find in the church
 - i. These identifications are based on: what they say and what they show
- b. Paul is equipping Titus with some ID’s of importance
 - i. He knows if Titus is going to get things straightened out and see spiritual growth, he is going to have to deal with some folks

3) Reality – not much has changed in 2000 years – we still face similar challenges in the church

- a. This passage is beneficial to you and I because it identifies to the church and her leaders people they need to keep an eye out for and what to do

4) Sermon: ID’s of Importance

- a. Text: Titus 3:9-15

The Disputer**1) A church that is set-in-order will exercise discernment when it comes to what they teach, debate, and avoid**

- a. In the closing portion of this letter, Paul addresses a group of people that he commands Titus to avoid
- b. We can summarize this group as “The Disputers”
 - i. They seek to fight, debate, and dispute useless and empty doctrinal claims, which if entreated, will soak up valuable time Titus could spend pouring into his task on the island

2) Paul’s concern

- a. Like the consistent beating of a drum Paul has repeatedly challenged the believers on Crete to maintain sound doctrine and good works
 - i. 1:1,5,9,10-16
 - ii. 2:1,10,15
 - iii. 3:8
- b. Q – Why would Paul stress such a need this many times in such a short letter?
 - i. Ans – the believers on the island of Crete have been over exposed to a large number of false teachers who claim to know God, yet are abominable, disobedient, and reprobate
 - 1. Notice – 1:10 “many”
 - ii. One main reason Titus’ task was to set in order what was lacking and ordain elders was due to the fact that the church faced a formidable group of false teachers who sought to devalue and dilute the truths of the Gospel
- c. IOW – Paul had a great concern for the spiritual growth of the Cretan believers
 - i. And he understood that their growth could be stifled by the false teachers unsound doctrine
- d. Paul knew the negative effects of false teaching
 - i. Subverts the soul – Acts 15:24
 - ii. 1 Tim 1:19,10
 - 1. Shipwrecks the faith
 - 2. Leads to blasphemy
 - iii. 2 Tim. 2:14,16,17
 - 1. Leads believers to ruin
 - 2. Produces ungodliness
 - 3. Spreads like an infection

3) Paul's command

- a. Textual insight – Avoid
 - i. Avoid – periistemi – peri = around + histemi = to stand
 - 1. Carries the idea of one turning themselves around in an act of avoidance
 - 2. Calling for a deliberate sidestep
 - ii. 2 Tim. 2:16 – translates it as “shun”
 - iii. Present imperative in middle voice
 - 1. A command calling for current and constant vigilance
 - 2. Middle voice – indicates a purposeful turning away from something
 - iv. This is not calling for a passive ignorance – this is calling for an intentional separation
 - v. IOW – there are some disputes believers ought not to get continually caught up in
- b. Why would Paul emphasize this command?
 - i. Titus had an honorable and monumental task to complete on Crete, as did the other elders
 - 1. They couldn't waste time on empty theological disputes that lead nowhere
 - ii. “One wonders how many hours and years and lifetimes of Christians have been lost to genuine teaching of God's Word and to effective evangelism and discipling because of time wasted with foolish controversies.” – J Mac
- c. It is vital for the pastor and believer to ask – Is this really worth undertaking?
 - i. Should I invest my the time I'm called to steward on this?
- d. It is true that Paul says the false teachers' mouths must be stopped – 1:11
 - i. Q – How?
 - 1. By the constant teaching, preaching, and edifying of good, sound doctrine – 2:15, 3:8
 - 2. Not by hours of aimless debate
 - ii. I've seen so many believers get caught up with senseless fighting over issues that should have simple been approached through avoidance
 - iii. We must be discerning as to what we engage with

4) Paul's classifications

- a. Q – what exactly did Paul classify as issues and disputes to be avoided?
 - i. In V9 he gives us 4 general categories
- b. Foolish questions
 - i. Foolish – moros – dull, silly, stupid – biblically: something that rejects God and His Word
 - 1. English – Moron
 - ii. Questions – zetesis – a seeking, a searching
 - 1. Root – zeteo – to seek
 - 2. In Paul's writings this always carries a negative connotation to it and is used in warnings
 - a. 1 Tim. 1:4 – it is contrasted with Godly edifying

- b. Again mentioned in 1 Tim. 6:3-5 – it is contrasted with faithful words
 - iii. These are not honest questions seeking biblical insight
 - 1. These are endless debate not aimed at truth, but aimed at argument
- c. Genealogies
 - i. Important to note – Paul is not belittling or discrediting the importance of genealogical historicity
 - 1. Genealogy is mentioned in the NT as something of importance
 - a. Matt. 1, Luke 3
 - 2. Genealogy is crucial for establishing the criteria and determining the God-given lineage of the priesthood, Kings, and Messiah
 - ii. Paul’s warning here has to do with the misuse of genealogies that were going on in his day
 - 1. Some sought to use genealogies for spiritual superiority
 - a. Tracing their lines back to someone important
 - b. Making up familial connections to have importance
 - c. 1 Cor. 1:12
 - 2. Some Jewish leaders built entire doctrines off of obscure lineage connections
 - a. Allegorical handling of genealogical lines
 - iii. Paul warns against this tactic also in 1 Tim. 1:4
- d. Contentions
 - i. Lit. strifes, debates, an argumentative spirit
 - ii. Not just a reference to disagreement, this was a heated, ego-driven conflict
- e. Strivings about the law
 - i. Strivings – fighting, battling, refers to the actual fight, not the overall war
 - 1. Stated in the plural – it takes 2
 - ii. This is a reference to the debates of Mosaic law, rituals, traditions of man which because “law” to the religious crowd, and obscure interpretations of law
 - iii. Since much of the early church was made up of converted Jews, it’s easy to see how this may have posed a problem
 - 1. Especially if you have Judaizers seeking to influence the church
 - iv. Paul handles these strivings masterfully in Gal. 6:12-16
 - v. Often – this was a reference to works-based righteousness

5) Note the conclusion

- a. Unprofitable – not beneficial, no + benefit
- b. Vain – leading to no object, having no end, denotes an aimlessness, emptiness
 - i. Word indicates a hollowness
- c. IOW – these disputes don’t:
 - i. Grow the church - Glorify God - Guard the heart
- d. 2 Tim. 2:23 – “But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing they do gender strifes.”

The Divider

- 1) **The next person Paul identifies to Titus can be labeled as the divider**
 - a. Refers to a person who seeks to cause division in the church
 - i. Specifically between the elders and the congregation
 - b. In a narrow sense – it was a reference to doctrinal disunity with the leadership (context)

- 2) **Ministering in Crete – Titus was faced with a host of opposition which he had to deal with**
 - a. Strong personalities which sought to gain a following APART from Titus and his ordained elders
 - b. People with argumentative tendencies causing issues – no doubt hindering the growth of the believers at times
 - c. Mixture of Jewish legalism, Greek mysticism, and Pagan hedonism

- 3) **Paul gives an identification**
 - a. Heretick – hairetikos – base definition means “a choosing”
 - i. Denotes a choosing of a sect of a party
 - ii. Developed into the idea of choosing one’s own opinion over truth
 - iii. Associated with the works of the flesh – Gal. 5:20
 - b. This word is not addressing one who is wrong – rather it is addressing one who is willfully divisive and eve self-willed in thought and action in the context of the church
 - c. Although the word is associated with false teachers, “Paul is casting a broader net, which includes anyone in the church who is divisive and disruptive.” J Mac
 - d. Listen – Rom. 16:17-18

- 4) **Paul gives instructions**
 - a. Addresses them twice
 - i. Admonish – mind + to put – a putting in mind
 1. It denotes a training by word including encouragement and reproof
 2. Carries idea of addressing and warning aimed at correction
 - ii. 2 times
 1. First to teach
 2. Second to warn
 - iii. Reject – refuse, avoid further involvement, to decline
 1. Present imperative – this is not a suggestion – break fellowship
 - b. Paul is putting church discipline into practical application here
 - c. Understand – the early church was a tight-knit community
 - i. Many relied on the fellowship of other members to survive
 - ii. Traveling preachers relied on the support of churches and their members
 - iii. To reject meant to not accommodate, support, give no influence to, break fellowship

5) Paul give insight

- a. Why such a hard stance? V11
- b. They subvert – corrupt, to be warped, Lit. to turn inside out, to change entirely
 - i. They are warped in their teachings and their divisions – and they will warp others
 - ii. Their actions reveal they are morally and spiritually corrupt
 - iii. Truth – Division on the outside often indicates distortion on the inside
- c. They are caught in sin through their divisiveness
 - i. They are steadily missing the mark
 - ii. This is why it must be taken seriously – they aren't just causing light issues in expressing "concern"
 - 1. They are divisive and in sin
- d. They are self-condemned – autokatakritos – self + to condemn
 - i. Their rejection of admonition and refusal to submit to the ordained elders reveals with true condition
 - ii. Cultural insight – In the Jewish legal system, part of being condemned meant that you were first warned about the action
 - 1. Talmudic law – if a person was to be found guilty, it wasn't enough to simply prove they did wrong, you also had to show they were warned first and transgresses
 - iii. Their divisiveness after admonition speaks volumes

6) Application

- a. Not every church disagreement is to be labeled heresy
 - i. Rather – this refers to real division, unrepentant divisiveness, dangerous disputes seeking to discredit God's ordained leaders
- b. Practice gracious church discipline
 - i. Matt. 18:15-17
 - ii. Give 2 admonitions
 - 1. 2 – biblical number for witness, testimony, union (2 = one flesh)
- c. Guard the unity of the church
 - i. It is precious and carries special blessings
 - ii. Psalm 133
 - iii. Overseers must oversee this
 - iv. God hates the one who causes division – Prov. 6:16-19

The Dedicated

- 1) **Following 2 negative identification, Paul closes the book with a picture of positive identifications**
 - a. In the closing verses Paul gives us a list of names of men worth looking at and learning from

- 2) **What's happening here:**
 - a. Paul is issuing a typical Pauline closure to a letter
 - b. Speaks of his travel plans which revolved around ministry
 - c. Speaks of ministry conditions
 - d. Issues personal greetings

- 3) **What's important about this – gives us a great ending identification on men who were faithful and dedicated to the ministry**
 - a. Most people would skim over this and miss the living example given here

- 4) **Be Ready**
 - a. Notice Paul encourages Titus to be diligent in obedience – “be diligent to come”
 - i. Make haste, be eager, PRIORITIZE this
 - ii. Move with urgency and intentionality
 - b. Much of the struggle in the modern church today is the sluggishness and lack of diligence when it comes to ministry
 - i. We take our time instead of redeem the time
 - ii. We prioritize our convenience rather than God's intended purposes
 - iii. Truth – ministry often suffer when commitment is casual
 - c. Artemas and Tychicus are reminders of quick and ready dedication
 - i. Tychicus – Col. 4:7
 - ii. Both men were ready to take over this mighty feat of leading the Cretan churches
 - d. Lesson – dedicated servants don't delay in obedience

- 5) **Be Reliable**
 - a. You don't get to the top alone – Maxwell
 - b. What's fascinating about this closing text is the plethora of names Paul is about to give who are involved in the ministry work, serving in the church, and blessing each other
 - i. Zenas – a lawyer – either a Roman litigator and Jewish law scholar
 - ii. Apollos – great orator, mighty in Scripture, humble disposition
 1. Acts 18:24-25
 - iii. Both men used their talents in service to God
 - c. Truth – We need co-laborers in the ministry
 - d. Dedicated believers intentionally invest in the success of others and can be counted on to be faithful

6) Be Righteous

- a. V14
- b. Learn – indicates it doesn't come naturally, it must be taught
 - i. Again – an emphasis on discipleship
 - ii. Dedication is attached to discipleship here
- c. Necessary uses
 - i. Real, tangible needs
 - ii. Indicates practical support
- d. Unfruitful – agricultural term indicating a tree of no practical value
 - i. Wasted potential
- e. IOW – part of good works is meeting real needs and producing real fruit
- f. Dedicated believers are to be useful in sanctity and action
 - i. Prayer ought to be – God use my practically

Closing

- 1) Notice how Paul closes – stresses the grace of God
 - a. Reminder how God meets our real need in grace
 - b. Palm Sunday – Jesus came to bring real unity/reconciliation
 - i. Changed our ID from Disputer and Divided to Dedicated follower