

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, March 27, 2024 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



TITUS STUDY

“Tough Grace in a Difficult Place”

DEALING WITH FACTIOUS PEOPLE

Titus 3:9-11

⁹ But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. ¹⁰ Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.”-Titus 3:9-11 (NKJV)



BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TITUS:

(1) **Author: Apostle Paul** - Authorship by the Apostle Paul (Titus 1:1) is essentially uncontested.

- (2) **Date: A.D. 62-64** - Titus was written between A.D. 62–64, while Paul ministered to Macedonian churches between his first and second Roman imprisonments,
- (3) **Literary Type: Pastoral Letter** - Along with 1, 2 Timothy, these letters to Paul’s sons in the faith are traditionally called “The Pastoral Epistles.”
- (4) **Place of Origin: Nicopolis** – Paul wrote this letter most likely from Nicopolis in Macedonia (some have suggested that the letter might possibly have been written from Corinth. (cf Titus 3:12).
- (5) **Recipient: Titus** - This epistle is named for its recipient, Titus, who is mentioned by name 13 times in the New Testament. The title in the Greek New Testament literally reads “To Titus.” Titus, like Timothy, had become a beloved disciple and fellow worker in the gospel. Most likely, Titus served with Paul on both the second and third missionary journeys. Paul’s last mention of Titus (in 2 Timothy 4:10) reports that he had gone for ministry in Dalmatia—modern Yugoslavia. The letter probably was delivered by Zenas and Apollos. Although Luke did not mention Titus by name in the book of Acts, it seems probable that Titus, a Gentile, met and may have been led to faith in Christ by Paul before or during the apostle’s first missionary journey. Later, Titus ministered for a period of time with Paul on the Island of Crete and was left behind to continue and strengthen the work. After Artemas or Tychicus arrived to direct the ministry there, Paul wanted Titus to join him in the city of Nicopolis, in the province of Achaia in Greece, and stay through the winter. Because of his involvement with the church at Corinth during Paul’s third missionary journey, Titus is mentioned 9 times in 2 Corinthians, where Paul refers to him as “my brother” (in 2 Corinthians 2:13) and “my partner and fellow worker” (in 2 Corinthians 8:23) The young elder was already familiar with Judaizers, false teachers in the church, who among other things insisted that all Christians, Gentile as well as Jew, were bound by the Mosaic law. Titus had accompanied Paul and Barnabas years earlier to the Council of Jerusalem where that heresy was the subject.
- (6) **Setting: Crete** - Crete, one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea, measuring 160 miles long by 35 miles at its widest, lying south of the Aegean Sea, had been briefly visited by Paul on his voyage to Rome (see Acts 27:7-9, 12, 13, 21).+ He returned there for ministry and later left Titus to continue the work, much as he left Timothy at Ephesus, while he went on to Macedonia. He most likely wrote to Titus in response to a letter from Titus or a report from Crete.
- (7) **Occasion: Pastoral encouragement and counsel** - Like Paul’s two letters to Timothy, the apostle gives personal encouragement and counsel to a young pastor who, though well-trained and faithful, faced continuing opposition from ungodly men within the churches where he ministered. Titus was to pass on that encouragement and counsel to the leaders he was to appoint in the Cretan churches.
- (8) **Theological Themes:** In contrast to several of Paul’s other letters, such as those to the churches in Rome and Galatia, the book of Titus does not focus on explaining or defending doctrine. Paul had full confidence in Titus’ theological understanding and convictions, evidenced by the fact that he entrusted him with such a demanding ministry. Except for the warning about false teachers and Judaizers, the letter gives no theological

correction, strongly suggesting that Paul also had confidence in the doctrinal grounding of most church members there, despite the fact that the majority of them were new believers.

Theological/Doctrinal Themes Affirmed in Titus:

- 1. God's sovereign election of believers (Titus 1:1-2)**
- 2. His saving grace (Titus 2:11, 3:5)**
- 3. Christ's deity and second coming (Titus 2:13)**
- 4. Christ's substitutionary atonement (Titus 2:14)**
- 5. The regeneration and renewing of believers by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5)**

God and Christ are regularly referred to as Savior in Titus, and the saving plan is so emphasized in that it indicates the major thrust of the epistle is that of equipping the churches of Crete for effective evangelism. This preparation required godly leaders who not only would shepherd believers under their care, but also would equip those Christians for evangelizing their pagan neighbors, who had been characterized by one of their own famous natives as liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons. In order to gain a hearing for the gospel among such people, the believers' primary preparation for evangelization was to live among themselves with the unarguable testimony of righteous, loving, selfless, and godly lives in marked contrast to the debauched lives of the false teachers. How they behaved with reference to governmental authorities and unbelievers was also crucial to their testimony

⁹ But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. ¹⁰ Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.”-Titus 3:9-11 (NKJV)

Application Questions

- 1. *Why is it essential to maintain that spiritual truth is both absolute and knowable?***
- 2. *If you claim that spiritual truth is absolute and knowable, critics will accuse you of being arrogant and intolerant. How would you respond to such charges?***
- 3. *How can we know which issues are worth defending and, if necessary, dividing over versus matters where we should be patient and tolerant with those who differ?***

Now a couple of things I want to take up for a minute just to lay some ground work and perspective for this study...

What is do we mean by “absolute truth” as a opposed to “relative truth”?

Definitions:

- (1) **Absolute Truth** = “Absolute truth is true regardless of how a person thinks or feels about it” – Here is a biblical example of absolute truth. Jesus is Lord. Regardless of how you feel about that statement, it is true. Many will argue about this statement and try to debate its veracity, but this does not change the truth that Jesus is Lord. Here is a verse that defines what absolute truth looks like in **Philippians 2:9-11**... *“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* In this verse, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. On this day opinions or feelings won’t matter because everyone will acknowledge Jesus as Lord. Whether you agree or not what makes this truth absolute is it doesn’t change based on your opinion.
- (2) **Relative Truth** = “Relative truth is the belief that truth changes based on the individual’s understanding of it” – With relative truth, there are no absolutes and what may be true for you is simply not true for me. A common statement reflecting relative truth may sound like this, *“You have your truth and I have mine.”* The problem with relative truth it is a contradiction in terms. If truth is factual and indisputable then you cannot have different truths for different people. Relative truth is a rejection of absolute truth. One reason people embrace the idea of relative truth is because it allows them to create their own reality that frees them to do whatever they want. I know we often like to think of this as a societal problem however this problem exists in the church as well. Paul warned us about this.

Characteristics of Truth:

- (1) **Truth is constant (It does not change)** - For something to be deemed true, it cannot change and must remain constant. Circumstances may change, but the truth surrounding those circumstances must remain constant or you are not dealing with truth.
- (2) **Truth is objective (It plays no favorites)** - Truth must also be objective. This means that the same truth is applicable to everyone. If the standard for truth changes from person to person, then it is no longer truth. For example, **Romans 3:23** tells us all have sinned. For this to be an absolute truth it must apply to everyone, which this statement does.
- (3) **Truth will prevail (It will be standing in the end)** - While I believe as Christians, we have a responsibility to defend the truth, at the end of the day truth will defend itself. Time is the greatest ally of truth. Eventually, the lies will fall by the wayside and all that will be left is the truth.

When you pull back the curtain, relative truth is standing on shaky ground. One place where the idea of relative truth is faulty is when it comes to the way to salvation, and the gospel.

Some will try to convince you it doesn't matter which road you choose to find salvation because all roads lead to the same place. Many would add just find one and get on it. This is the great fallacy of relative truth because this simply cannot be true. This is not true in a physical sense, and it cannot be true in a spiritual sense.

If someone asked me how to get to NYC and I told them it doesn't matter what road you take just pick one and you will get there, you would immediately see the error in that statement. The same is true when it comes to salvation. All roads do not lead to the same place. For starters they don't all teach the same thing so how can they all lead to the same destination.

Jesus established a truth that separates him from everyone else. *"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'"* (John 14:6). This is not only a truth but also without question an absolute truth that leaves no room for another interpretation or relativism. This statement shuts the door to any other way of getting to the Father and any other hope of salvation. If you believe this you will experience the benefit of this truth, however, your belief is not necessary for this to be true. This will be true whether you believe or choose not to believe. Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father, and that will never change.

One quick side note. Having and holding an absolute truth like this is not meant to make you judgmental or give you a feeling of superiority. The goal should be to recognize you possess the truth and by God's grace and the help of the Holy Spirit help others to discover it, but we must, as believers, stand for and protect the truth for it is the way of salvation.

What do we mean by "tolerance" as opposed to "intolerance" as it relates to Christians and Christianity?

Definitions:

(3) Tolerance (as it relates to Christians) = "The ability or willingness to tolerate something, in particular the existence of opinions or behavior that one does not necessarily agree with." – It doesn't mean you necessarily agree with it, but you show a level of putting up with it... tolerating it, because whether right or wrong others are free to their opinion and views. This is somewhat more complex, however in our world today. The original definition of tolerance and the way in which the word is used now are quite different. Originally, tolerance meant to acknowledge that others have differing beliefs and accept that it is their right to do so. In this way, Christians are to absolutely be tolerant.

Recently, tolerance has come to mean accepting that those other beliefs are true—something Christians absolutely cannot do. Unfortunately, the world no longer defines "tolerance" as acknowledgement that others have a differing belief. It has come to mean full acceptance of those beliefs. Of course this definition makes no logical sense because

to embrace this type of tolerance precludes any personal opinion or belief. Christians are not to endorse religious beliefs that run counter to what the Bible teaches. The problem with tolerance as it is now meant is that it rejects the possibility that objective truth exists. The Bible teaches that truth does exist, that God is truth, and that we are to follow in His truth. John 1:14 and 17 says that Jesus, who came from the Father, gives us truth. John 8:32 and Romans 6:16-23 says that the truth sets us free from the control of sin.

- (4) **Intolerance (as it relates to Christians) = “An unwillingness or refusal to tolerate or respect opinions or beliefs contrary to one's own”** – There is growing cultural skepticism and criticism of all things “Christian”. At times like this, the issue of religious “tolerance” is sometimes raised and examined. Christians are often called intolerant, especially when examined under a new definition of tolerance that has emerged in our culture. How should we respond when people call us “intolerant” simply because we refuse to embrace a particular value or behavior? Those who accuse Christians of being intolerant have a distorted view of what tolerance really entails. Rather than accepting all views as equally valid, true tolerance involves recognizing and respecting others when we don't approve of their values, beliefs, and practices.

Certainly... no doubt, Christianity has its fair share of judgmental and intolerant people. I have no interest in covering up the misbehavior of Christians. But before you are tempted to dismiss the evidence for the Christian faith because of Christian intolerance, keep something in mind: *When Christians act in an arrogant, judgmental manner towards others, they are not following Scriptural teachings.* Pride is one of the seven deadly sins (Prov. 6:16, 17), an evil that comes from the heart (Mark 7:21–23). I apologize for judgmental Christians; remember, though, when Christians act “holier than thou,” they act inconsistently with what Christianity *itself* requires. True Christians aim to be at peace with others (Heb. 12:14), build relationships with people regardless of creed, race, nationality, or sex (John 4:1–42; Luke 9:1–10), and are called to be humble and gentle (Eph. 4:2). Yes, some who profess to be Christians sometimes express judgment and intolerance, failing to follow the example and teachings of Jesus. But even if Christians were kind and gracious in their attitudes, the critic might claim, wouldn't they still be intolerant for condemning the beliefs of others? What's fascinating is that the people who condemn Christians for acting as if they're right and others are wrong are, in that very action, acting as if they themselves are right and Christians are wrong. So they are at that moment doing the very thing they say is wrong. When you think about it, it's pretty silly to condemn people for thinking they are right—because aren't you simultaneously thinking you are right in saying they are wrong?

Therefore, for two reasons no one should condemn Christians just for thinking they're right and others are wrong, and calling that intolerance: (1) *Everybody else does the same thing*, and (2) *Christians might really be right, after all.*

Let me say, if you are called “intolerant” as a Christian because of a judgmental, bigoted, or hate-filled, vitriolic exchange toward another person and their views and opinions you, as a Christian are being intolerant and un-Christlike in your response to that person. On the other hand if you are being called “intolerant” because you, as a believer/Christian, have a differing view because of your Biblical belief and Christian faith, and have lovingly and graciously, humbly expressed that view... that is not intolerance. That is a differing view! And we might say a differing view based on “absolute truth” that is essential.

Quotes Worth Discussing

“Today, the pressure to fill auditoriums and services has driven many pastors to place the felt needs, or tastes, of the people above their duty to Christ. On every hand we hear of the Gospel being molded into a non-confrontative message intended to meet felt needs and impress the sinful heart. And, by most standards, this new philosophy of church life is working, as more and more auditoriums are filled with people hungry for a message that will affirm that they are actually on fairly good terms with the Almighty. But the biblical message is the message of the cross. It cuts right across the grain of the modern age’s preoccupation with pride, tearing down the façade and exposing the wretchedness of the human heart... Unfortunately, while the modern “un-gospel” may fill seats, it is the true gospel of sin and grace that is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16).” – *David W. Hegg* (Pastor, Grace Baptist Church in Santa Clarita, CA / Author, *The Obedience Option, The Well, When My Heart is Faint, Appointed to Preach*)

“The deader your gospel, the flashier your package.” – *Vance Havner*

“If they had a social gospel in the days of the prodigal son, somebody would have given him a bed and a sandwich and he never would have gone home.” – *Vance Havner*

“Today’s emphasis on packaging the gospel according to cultural demands doesn’t beautify truth but dresses up error.” – *Dr. Jerry Wragg* (Pastor, Grace Immanuel Bible Church in Jupiter, FL / Author, *Courageous Churchmen, Free to Be Holy, Exemplary Spiritual Leadership*)

All of this is a necessary background to understand what Paul is getting at in **Titus 3:9-11. He tells Titus not to get involved in meaningless controversies and theological speculation and to deal with factious people who promote such ideas in the church. Paul’s words are meaningless unless there is such a thing as knowable, absolute spiritual truth. He is assuming that the gospel is true and that it is the responsibility of the leaders in the church to maintain that truth by dealing with those who try to subvert it. He’s saying,**

To maintain the truth of the gospel, church leaders must deal properly with factious people.

“⁹ But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. ¹⁰ Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.”-Titus 3:9-11 (NKJV)

How To Deal with Faction Causing People:

- 1. The church is to maintain the truth of the gospel**
- 2. Church leaders must deal properly with factionous (divisive, contentious) people**

THE CHURCH IS TO MAINTAIN THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL

What is happening to the truth of the gospel in today’s church? In your view what is happening to the truth of the gospel in many churches today? Not only that, why do you think this is happening? What is the danger of this, really? In the space provided below write your thoughts. _____

The truth of the gospel today is...

- | | | |
|--|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. Being <u>watered</u> down | 4. Being <u>misstated</u> | 7. Being <u>shunned</u> |
| 2. Being <u>distorted</u> | 5. Being <u>replaced</u> | 8. Being <u>disbelieved</u> |
| 3. Being <u>pushed</u> <u>aside</u> | 6. Being deemed <u>intolerant</u> | 9. Being called <u>evil</u> |

A recent piece appearing in a theological journal for pastor asked the question, “What are the most dangerous threat to the gospel today?” He is their finding...

What are the most dangerous threats to the gospel today? It’s impossible to answer what’s “most” dangerous to the gospel today without God’s knowledge of everything. But here are some prominent threats that loom on the horizon:

- 1. The prosperity “gospel”** - The belief that the gospel is about God making us rich is a lie. Jesus came to save us from sin and reconcile us to God (Rom. 5:10-11; 1 Pet. 3:18), giving us every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3) and promising us suffering in this life and glory in the next (Acts 14:22, Rom. 8:18).
- 2. The attack on penal, substitutionary atonement** - Many people reject the idea that on the cross God punished Jesus for the sins of his people. But to reject this is to reject the heart of the gospel itself (Rom. 3:21-26).
- 3. The rejection of the wrath of God** - People today are extremely uncomfortable with the idea of a holy God who will punish sin. But if we reject the wrath of God we lie to ourselves about the fundamental problem the gospel saves us from (John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; 1 Thess. 1:10).

4. **The rejection of sin** - Some argue that sin is just an idea that people in power use to make others behave the way they want them to. But the Bible presents sin—and especially God’s wrath against sin—as humanity’s fundamental problem. Reject sin and you’ve rejected our only Savior who “died for our sins” (1 Cor. 15:3).
5. **A man-centered view of the universe** - We like to think that we run things around here. We like to think that no one can tell us what to do or believe—after all, we have rights! But the Bible presents exactly the opposite picture: we live in God’s universe (Rom. 11:36). He made us (Ps. 100:3). He rules over us (Dan. 4:34-35; 1 Tim. 6:15-16). We either worship him or hate him—and face the consequences (Rom. 1:18, 25; 8:5-8). A man-centered view of the universe is the opposite of the gospel and leaves no room for the gospel.
6. **“All paths lead to God”** - People like to think that whatever anyone believes is fine so long as they’re sincere. People like to think that God will accept everyone in the end. After all, isn’t he a loving God? But the gospel is a radically exclusive message: Jesus alone is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12, NIV).
7. **Other threats** - Widespread belief in a brand of “tolerance” which, in fact, is not very tolerant but is fundamentally a rejection of universal truth; cultural materialism; nihilism/philosophical unbelief/radical skepticism; the ever-continual attacks on Scripture, even from within the church.

3 Key Passage to Ponder:

- ★ 1. **2 Corinthians 4:3-6** – *“³ But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. ⁵ For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake. ⁶ For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”* **Why is the gospel important? What is the danger of the gospel being watered down, neglected, or distorted (for us and for others/the world)?**
- ★ 2. **Romans 1:16** – *“¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”* **Why is the gospel important? What is the danger of the gospel being watered down, neglected, or distorted (for us and for others/the world)?**
- ★ 3. **Ephesians 1:13** – *“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”* **Why is the gospel important? What is the danger of the gospel being watered down, neglected, or distorted (for us and for others/the world)?**

This point is not directly in the text, but it underlies Paul’s thought. In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul’s writes these words regarding the church, *“¹⁵ But if I am delayed, I write so that you may*

know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ^[a]ground of the truth.” The main spiritual truth in the Bible is that Jesus Christ is the only Savior for the sinful human race.

- Jesus is eternal God in human flesh who gave Himself on the cross to pay the just penalty for our sins.
- God offers a complete pardon and eternal life to every person who repents of his sin and puts his trust in Jesus alone.
- Believers individually and the church corporately are entrusted with preserving and proclaiming this message of truth, centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Before we look at Paul’s specific instructions for dealing with factious people in the church, note three things:

3 Things to Note Concerning This Truth We Are To Maintain:

(1) We must affirm that there is such a thing as knowable, absolute truth in the spiritual realm - If there are many ways to God, then Jesus came to this earth and gave His life on the cross in vain. He could have stayed in heaven and said...

- The native spirit worshipers will find Me in their way
- The Hindus have their millions of gods, and any one of them is just as good as another
- The Buddhists are such peace-loving people, so they’re welcome in heaven in spite of their mixed-up views of reincarnation
- You’ve got to admire the zeal of those Muslims, even if they don’t believe in Me!
- Even Wiccan’s have a good streak in them, so we’ll give them their own section of heaven!”

Why should Jesus have gone through the agony of the cross, if there are many ways to God? Jesus not only claimed to be the truth, the only way to the Father, but also He talked about the Spirit of truth, whom the Father would send to guide the apostles into all the truth (John 14:17, 26; 15:26; see also, 1 John 2:18-27; 4:1-6).

He said John 17:3, “³ *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*”

Jesus prayed in John 17:17, “¹⁷ *Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.*”

Jesus was affirming that spiritual truth is narrow, it is knowable, and it is contained in verbal and/or written propositions.

In speaking to Pilate John 18:37 Jesus summed up the reason why He came to earth, “³⁷ *Pilate therefore said to Him, “Are You a king then?” Jesus answered, “You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come*

into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

These things are important to affirm, not only because unbelievers in our godless culture are attacking them, but also because professing believers in the church are attacking them.

The growing "progressive church" movement denies that spiritual truth can be expressed or known in written, propositional form. They disparage preaching and deny that anyone can get up and speak authoritatively in the name of the Lord.

John MacArthur critiques progressive church leader, Brian McLaren, who rejects the exclusivism of Scripture (*The Master's Seminary Journal*, Vol. 17, Number 2, Fall, 2006, p. 150). McLaren says that, "Christians should see members of other religions and non-religions not as enemies but as beloved neighbors, whenever possible, as dialogue partners and even collaborators" (citing McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* [Zondervan, 2004], p. 35). McLaren says that, "We should celebrate the 'Jesus' of all theological traditions, from conservative Protestant to Roman Catholic to Liberation theology, much as we enjoy the foods of various cultures."

Dr. John MacArthur rightly concludes (*ibid.*, p. 151), "Only by turning a blind eye to the Bible's clear teaching, can anyone entertain with any enthusiasm the broad ecumenism of McLaren."

So to apply Paul's words to Titus, we must affirm that there is such a thing as knowable, absolute truth in the spiritual realm.

(2) **Truth matters!** - Our culture believes in the exclusivity of truth in the physical realm, but it denies it in the spiritual realm.

Think of this, in the physical realm, it makes all the difference in the world whether you take a cyanide pill or an aspirin to deal with your headache! It doesn't matter how sincere you are in your belief that the cyanide pill will help or in your belief that we must be open to different theories of dealing with headaches. Sincerity isn't the issue; truth is. Even if you think that it's judgmental to criticize the cyanide pill, it will kill you if you swallow it. An aspirin may relieve your headache. Unless Jesus was a liar or a deceived man, believing the truth about Him is the difference between spending eternity in heaven or in hell. Peter affirms regarding Jesus...

- **Acts 4:12** - In Acts 4:12, "*And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.*"
- **1 Timothy 2:5** - Paul states in 1 Timothy 2:5, "*For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*"

- **1 John 5:11-12** - John draws the line in 1 John 5:11-12, *“And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”*

It is significant that in Paul’s final three letters to his two helpers, Timothy and Titus, there is a strong emphasis on truth and sound doctrine. Without going through the many references in 1 & 2 Timothy, note these in Titus (emphasis added):

The Break Down: Paul’s Strong Emphasis on Truth and Sound Doctrine in the Pastoral Epistle (focus on Titus):

1. **Titus 1:1-2:** *“Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.”*
2. **Titus 1:9:** An elder must hold *“fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”*
3. **Titus 1:13-14:** *“This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.”*
4. **Titus 2:1:** *“But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.”*
5. **Titus 2:7:** Paul mentions *“purity in doctrine.”*
6. **Titus 2:15:** *“These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.”*

Obviously, you cannot speak, exhort, and reprove relative ideas with all authority! So, Scripture affirms that there is knowable, absolute truth in the spiritual realm and such truth matters greatly. The only way to deny this is to deny the words of Jesus and the apostles, written in the New Testament.

- (3) **Truth must be obeyed, not philosophized phila-so-fised (theorized, reasoned, moralized)** - God did not give us His truth so that philosophers and theologians may sit around and speculate about their speculations about God. It is given to change our lives as we submit to it and obey it.

As we’ve seen, this is also a major thrust throughout Titus (1:9-16; 2:1-10, 11-14; 3:1-8). Apparently there were many in Crete who loved to speculate about theology. They seem to have been Hellenistic Jews who promoted their fanciful theories about genealogies and disputes about the Law (1:14; 3:9). But Paul said that their foolish controversies were unprofitable and worthless, because they did not lead to godliness.

Think about this... if our theology does not promote the supremacy and lordship of Jesus Christ and the need to submit every aspect of our lives to Him, it is worthless speculation.

This is one reason why I like John Calvin. One scholar writes of him, (about Calvin) “Piety was the keynote of his character. He was a God-possessed soul. Theology was no concern to him as a study in itself; he devoted himself to it as a framework for the support of all that religion meant to him” (A. Mitchell Hunter, cited by John McNeill, editor, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* [Westminster Press], by John Calvin, p. lii).

McNeill adds (*ibid.*), (about Calvin) “Gratitude, love, and obedience are involved in this religious attitude which is the indispensable condition of a sound theology. Since we ‘owe everything to God,’ in Calvin’s pages we are everywhere confronting God, not toying with ideas or balancing opinions about him.”

In other words, God’s truth must be obeyed. With that foundation, we are ready to examine Paul’s instructions on how to deal with factious people in the church.

CHURCH LEADERS MUST DEAL PROPERLY WITH FACTIOUS (DIVISIVE, CONTENTIOUS) PEOPLE

Notice Paul’s words again in our passage... Paul writes, *“⁹ But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. ¹⁰ Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.”-Titus 3:9-11 (NKJV)*

If there is no such thing as absolute spiritual truth, then we have no basis for any kind of discipline and discipling (equipping, instruction and helping others to grow in the faith) others in the church. If all ideas about God are equally valid, then Paul’s words here make no sense. But, if there is a true gospel and a false “gospel” (Gal. 1:6-9), then we need to apply Paul’s directive here.

Paul’s Directives: Why Deal With a Factious Person:

- (1) **The problem of factionalism is a sin problem** - “Factious” comes from a Greek word meaning self-chosen, thus, an opinionated person.
 - He tries to defend his opinions from Scripture, but really he is motivated by pride.
 - He tries to gain a following by forcing people to choose between his views and those of the church leaders, thus creating parties or factions in the church.
 - But in **Galatians 5:20**, Paul lists “factions” as a deed of the flesh, along with “idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, and dissensions.”
 - In **Titus 3:11**, Paul says, *“such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.”*
 - By self-condemned, Paul may mean that when such false teachers attack godly church leaders, they expose themselves for what they really are.
 - Often, they take their followers and leave the church, again showing their true colors (1 John 2:19).

- Arguing with them about their doctrine is pointless, because the real issue isn't doctrine.

The real issue is sin, especially pride. Often those who promote false teaching are using it to cover up other major sins.

- (2) **Because sin destroys people and churches, to deal honestly, humbly, and redemptively in confronting sin is an act of love and obedience** - I add this because invariably when church leaders deal a factious person in a confrontational way, some will accuse the leaders of being unloving or unkind. But to preserve the doctrinal purity of the church, to keep sin from spreading, and to uphold the honor of the God of truth, we must deal with these in a Christ-like manner... honestly, humbly and hopefully in a redemptive way... our aim should always be to restore them until it becomes clear that they refuse to repent. But when their determination to continue in sin is evident, we may have to follow the steps of church discipline. **(READ: Matthew 18:15-17)**
- "¹⁵Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' ¹⁷And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."*
- (3) **To deal properly with factious people, church leaders must determine if an issue is worth contending over or not** - Paul says in Titus 3:9, *"But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless."* "Unprofitable and worthless" refer back to verse 8, where Paul instructed Titus to speak confidently about the truth of the gospel ("these things" refers to 3:4-7), *"so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things [the gospel truths] are good and profitable for men."*

How do you determine what is and isn't worth contending over? (according to Paul in Titus)

- (1) **Empty and idle speculation is not worth contending over** –
- (2) **Truth and spiritual matters are worth contending over** -

Paul's yardstick for whether a matter is worth debating is, does it relate to genuine conversion, godliness, and good deeds? If it is just a matter of idle speculation that really doesn't affect these core issues, then don't waste your time on it.

When Paul tells Titus to avoid these controversies, I understand him to mean that we must not get into public debates over speculative matters that do not center on the gospel or godly living. They will waste our time.

- In my opinion, many of the debates over the finer points of prophecy can easily degenerate into useless speculation.

- How does it affect the gospel or godliness?
- If it doesn't, don't spend too much time debating the issue.
- But, if someone in our church is promoting such peripheral matters as if they are important, trying to build a following, then he needs to be confronted privately and asked to stop.
- Our goal is to get the person back to being focused on the gospel and godly living.
- If the person persists in promoting his views and creating a faction, there may be a sin issue behind it (3:11), which must be dealt with.
- If the person refuses to stop spreading controversy over peripheral or uncertain matters, then he must be warned a second time.
- After that, Paul says (3:10), reject him.

Commentators are not agreed on what it means to reject these difficult people.

- Some say that it means something less than excommunication.
- But, surely, Paul wouldn't allow such divisive, sinning men to remain in the fellowship of the church, trying to recruit more people to their cause!
- In Romans 16:17-18, he writes something similar to our text... listen to these words in Romans 16:17-18, *"¹⁷ Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. ¹⁸ For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple."*
- Since divisiveness and trying to recruit people to join a faction are sins, those who persist in such sins must be dealt with in a healthy but deliberate way.
- If you think that we as church leaders are being judgmental and unloving if we ever need to deal with someone in this manner, you are probably being more influenced by our tolerant culture than by the truth of God's Word.
- God wants the elders in each church to maintain the truth of the gospel and godly standards of behavior.
- When someone deviates in either of these areas, our goal should be to try to restore him to obedience to the truth.
- But, if the person refuses correction, the Bible is clear that they must be dealt with in a succinct and godly way... even if it is difficult. We must not be afraid of the hard work.
- If we as leaders do not do so, we are being disobedient to God's Word of truth.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps our most important stewardship of all is the stewardship of the gospel.

As Jesus left this earth, he gave his disciples and his church this instruction in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching*

them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

When you read the early history of the church in the book of Acts and when you read the New Testament epistles, you can't help but see how seriously Christians took this charge. They understood that God had made them stewards of the good news of Jesus Christ... the gospel. And they gave all they had to ensure they were good and faithful stewards. It is because of their faithful stewardship that the gospel spread through the years and the generations until it spread to me and to you. Here is truth you must never, never forget, “You are a Christian only because other Christians were faithful stewards of the gospel. How may you and I be faithful stewards in protecting the gospel?”

2 Crucial Ways to Protect the Gospel:

- (1) **You protect the gospel by growing in spiritual health and maturity** - Paul told his young protégé Timothy to *“guard the good deposit entrusted to you”* in 2 Timothy 1:14. Paul told Timothy that, as a Christian, he was responsible before God to understand, believe, and protect the gospel. That is true of you as well. The more you know of God and his gospel and the more you know of the Bible and of Christian doctrine, the greater your ability to identify any deviations or counterfeits. The call to grow in health is not only a call for you to do what is best for you, but a call for you to do what is best for others. The gospel is always under attack and the more you know of it, the greater your ability to protect it.
- (2) **You protect the gospel by spreading it** - There might be a temptation to guard the gospel by locking it up and sealing it away, but the better way is to spread it so much that it becomes impossible to stop. Just think of how the Bible spread. If there had been one Bible and it had been kept under lock and key, it would inevitably have been lost to history. Instead, Christians diligently copied the Bible. Sometimes they copied an entire book in beautiful scrolls, and sometimes they copied a verse or two on little scraps of parchment. But they copied it so often that today we have tens of thousands of source documents that enable us to reasonably reconstruct the original. We have such confidence in the Bible exactly because it spread so far so fast. And the gospel functions much the same. We guard the gospel by spreading it, by proclaiming it to everyone we encounter. The farther it spreads, the more difficult it is to twist it or lose it. So spread that gospel to everyone you encounter — your family first, your friends, your neighbors, your coworkers, and even outright strangers.

God means to glorify himself by and through the gospel. We are God's plan for accomplishing that. He has no backup. He means for the good and pure gospel to spread from one person to another until it has spread over the entire earth. Christian, this is God's charge to you. He has given you his gospel and called you to steward it. Will you?