

Avoid Heretics in Order to Be Devoted to the Purpose of Redemption

by James Jennings

This sermon emphasizes the importance of avoiding heretics and divisive people to stay devoted to the purpose of redemption. Paul's commands in Titus 3 are explored, urging believers to insist on the Gospel, avoid foolish controversies, warn those led astray, and have nothing more to do with divisive individuals. The goal is to be zealous for good works, driven by the Gospel, and to maintain unity by dealing with divisive influences decisively.

Scripture: Titus 3:10, 1 Corinthians 15:33, Hebrews 12:15, Romans 16:17, 1 Timothy 6:3, 2 Timothy 2:25, 1 Timothy 1:3, 1 Corinthians 5:6, Romans 16:17

Topics: "Unity in the Church", "Discernment in Faith"

Description

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Transcript

So Titus 3, chapter 3, I want to speak this morning on avoiding heretics and divisive people in order to be devoted to the purpose of your redemption. Or you could say it like this, insist on the Gospel while avoiding heretics and warning others to do so in order to be devoted to good works. And we see these four realities.

We're going to look at four commands, exhortations that Paul gives Titus to give the professing brethren there at Crete in Titus 3. We're going to read verses 8. Actually, we'll just read verse 1 to 11. Starting in verse 1. Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities. To be obedient.

To be ready for every good work. To speak evil of no one. To avoid quarreling.

To be gentle. To show perfect courtesy toward all people. Because we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

But, when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us. Not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Verse 8, the saint is trustworthy.

And I want you to insist on these things so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people, but avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law. Why? For they are unprofitable and worthless.

As for a person who stirs up division after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him. Knowing that such a person is warped and sinful, he is self-condemned. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank You for Your Word that we can go to the Scriptures. Lord, we thank You for even just the way Paul writes, that he gives us conjunctions and connecting words so we can understand his logic. Lord, I just ask for Your help.

Father, we pray for Lord Brother Michael over there in Nigeria. Lord, would You please, Lord, help him. Sustain him.

Lord, help his faith to be maintained in the midst of this that he'll all the more come out of, Lord, another situation where he's been imprisoned. Lord, would it work for the advancement of the Gospel? Lord, encourage him. Here he is isolated and alone in many ways.

I just pray, Father, draw near to him. Help him. In Jesus' name, Amen.

So Paul gives Titus at least, I say at least because there's more, but at least in this area, four commands to give to the church at Crete in order that they might stay because we've got to stay living out the purpose of redemption. What I'm calling the purpose of redemption. And because I'm using that term purpose of redemption, rather than as the text says, it says right there in v. 8 that our people may be careful to devote themselves to good works.

And then you go down to v. 14 and let our people learn to devote themselves to good works so as to help cases of urgent need and not be unfruitful. Rather than just say, be devoted to good works, think about it in a deeper way, that is a purpose of why we've been redeemed. And you see that in chapter 2. Look at v. 14.

Christ gave Himself for us to redeem, to pay the price to secure our release from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession. Why? Who are zealous for good works. So one of the purposes Christ has redeemed you is that you would be zealous for good works.

Not that you would do good works, but that your attitude towards them would be that one of being zealous. Zeal means you're vehement. You're passionate.

You're really contending for a thing to be present in your life. And isn't that so? Every Christian, any time you feel dull, it's like, Lord, I want to not lose zeal. I don't want my zeal to abate.

I want to continue to be zealous. And if you've been bought with the price, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, aren't we asking ourselves constantly, Lord, am I living a life pleasing to You in view of what You have done for me? Am I being fully devoted to You? Or as v. 14 in chapter 3 says, not to be unfruitful. What Christian wants to be unfruitful? I don't want to be unfruitful.

I've been a Christian 11 years. I look back on those 11 years, and one thing that can make me sad is times I was led astray by certain things and I wasn't as fruitful as I could have been because the Lord is worthy of our fruitfulness. And not just worthy for it, but chapter 2, v. 14 says, He actually gave Himself and He saved us that we would be those who are zealous for good works.

When you think of these good works, we see some of them in chapter 2. Look at chapter 2, v. 1, but it's for you to teach with accords with sound doctrine. So here are things that are according to sound teaching. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled.

Sound in faith and love and in steadfastness. And then it talks about the women. They're to be reverent in behavior, not slanders or slaves to much wine.

They're to teach what is good. So train the young women to love their husbands and children. To be self-controlled.

So older men be self-controlled. Women be self-controlled. Pure, working at home kind, submissive to their own husbands.

Why? So that God's Word might not be reviled or blasphemed. V. 6, moves on to the younger men. Younger men are to be self-controlled.

Urge this. V. 7, show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works. And in your teaching, show integrity.

And he goes on here, but there's constant examples here of what a fruitful life looks like and what these good works look like. What we read in chapter 3, v. 1. These reminders. Submitting to rulers.

Not speaking evil. Being ready for every good work. Showing perfect courtesy toward all people.

He gives these things and then he mentions in v. 3, because you once were. It reminds us of what we were when we were lost. So, what commands does he give here in v. 8, 9, 10, and 11? I want to look at four.

Four commands and consider Paul's logic. Because he doesn't just give it without a reason. There's a reason for what he says.

So I want to summarize those four things and look at them a little more in depth. So, number one, we first have a positive command. V. 8, the saying is trustworthy.

I want you to insist on these things. Why? We're going to have to define what the these things is. But look what he gives a reason why to insist on these things.

So that... So insist on these things because it will bring about what? So that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. So I want you to insist on these things so that the believers will be careful to be devoted to good works. So whatever the these things is, Paul believes if

that's insisted upon, what will it bring about in the Christian's life? Devotion to good works.

So, I want to think now about what the these things in v. 8 means. The first one. And then the second one.

Right? We've got two times he says these things. And he says this multiple times in the letter prior to this. So, v. 8, the saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things.

Look right before here. What saying, what's the these things have to at least be referring to? V. 4-7. In v. 4-7 in the Greek language is one sentence.

Just one sentence. And v. 4-7 is in some way you could say it's a small summary statement of what? Of the Gospel. So, the saying is trustworthy.

I want you to insist on I think the first these things definitely includes v. 4-7 which is the Gospel. What Christ has done. His goodness, love, and kindness.

Saving us not because of works. All of those realities. The Spirit being poured out richly upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Now, could it also include v. 1, 2, and 3? Those sayings are trustworthy and I want you to insist on those things. Yeah, that might be part of Paul's idea, but definitely v. 4-7 is what he's referring to. And think of this, he goes on to say that those who believe in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works.

And then he says these things. Now what's this these things refer to? These things are excellent and profitable. Well, that these things clearly refers to the good works.

He just said be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things, these good works, are excellent and profitable for people. So, v. 8, let's read it again.

The saying is trustworthy. This Gospel of Christ. I want you to insist on the Gospel so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works.

These things, I think part of it implying the works, these works that they're doing are excellent and profitable because he says I want our people to not be unfruitful. Here he's saying what they're doing is profitable, so it seems like he's referring to they're doing these good works. Are profitable for people.

And then he gives in v. 9 a contrast, but avoid. So he gives something to insist upon and then he gives something to avoid. So, Paul is teaching here Gospel-driven obedience.

Maybe you've heard that term. Different people use that term. I like that term here.

Paul is saying what will drive that Christian to be devoted to good works is the hearing and insisting upon what Christ has done. If you preach the Gospel, if you emphasize what Christ has done, these realities here, you know what? They're going to go and be devoted to good works. They're going to be driven with what Christ has done as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5, for the love of Christ.

Christ's love for us controls us. What He has done. We no longer live for ourselves, but we live for Him.

So that's the first command. It's this positive one. This is what you should insist on.

And if you insist on this, it brings about people who are devoted for good works. Now he gives a second exhortation here. V. 9. So insist upon v. 8. V. 9, but avoid.

Shun. Have nothing to do with foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are excellent and profitable, for they are unprofitable and worthless. So v. 8, these things, the Gospel, is excellent and profitable, these good works.

V. 9, these foolish controversies, they're the opposite. They're unprofitable and worthless. And he says here to avoid them.

So think of this for a moment. As you're hearing the Gospel, as you're thinking about the essentials of the faith, as you're thinking about what Christ has done, it leads you to do what? What's Paul saying it leads you to do? To be devoted to good works. And that's fulfilling the purpose of redemption.

He has saved you to be zealous for good works. Does Satan want you to get away from fulfilling that purpose? Absolutely. So what happens is you all of a sudden come along, some foolish controversy, and you start having your time consumed with that foolish controversy.

Now you're not insisting on these things, the Gospel. You're insisting on the foolish controversy. What do you think? Does that lead you to be devoted to good works? No, it doesn't.

So now your devotion is no longer to good works. Your devotion is no longer to a purpose for which you have been saved. The devil lures you away, zaps your time, leads you into possible error, and ultimately, even apostasy.

And he says in v. 9, these things are unprofitable. They're worthless. They have no value.

So that's the second. Now he gives a third. You could call it exhortation.

A command. V. 10, as for a person who stirs up division, I mean, this is the person who's insisting on these foolish controversies, these quarrels about the law, as for a person who stirs up division, what's the first thing we should do when we see that happening? What does Paul say? Warn. So the third exhortation here for us to continue to be devoted to the purpose of redemption, to be zealous for good works, it's not just we insist on the Gospel and we're devoted to those good works.

It's not just we avoid foolish controversy. But when we see others in this church start to get led astray, we don't just stand by with our hands in our pockets. It says we warn them.

And they would do the same to us. So we are to warn those who are not insisting upon that which is trustworthy. And that's incredibly gracious.

We're going to think about that a little more later. So that's the third, is warning. Because we're all in it together.

But if we're all in it together, you don't just warn someone and then they don't respond and you do nothing. What's Paul now say the fourth thing to do is? The fourth thing is for a person who stirs up division after warning them once, then you go a second time, he doesn't hear you, and here the fourth thing you do is you have nothing more to do with him. So the fourth thing here is you cut them off.

You put them out of the church. You remove them on your Facebook. You have no idea what's going on in their life and you don't need to know what's going on in their life.

Because they're not insisting on the Gospel and they're not helping you fulfill the purpose of redemption for which Christ has died to make you zealous for good works. We know that such a person as warped and sinful, he is self-condemned. The person's behavior has condemned themselves.

The person's behavior has condemned themselves. So, the four things that I'm seeing here at least that we can see here, number one is that Christians are to insist on the Gospel. As you insist on the Gospel, people are devoted to good works.

Number two, Christians are to avoid foolish controversies. Because if you get into a foolish controversy, you're no longer insisting on the Gospel, then you're no longer devoted to good works, because insisting on the Gospel leads you to being devoted to good works, and now you're not fulfilling the purpose of redemption. You're not being zealous for good works.

You're distracted. The third thing is since we're living in this together as a body, you see people who are led astray by foolish controversies, you warn them. They don't hear you.

You warn them again. And then the fourth thing, if they don't hear, you don't just let them stay among us or stay in your life in whatever way they're influencing your life, whatever means it is, you have nothing more to do with them. Because you realize what's at stake here is not some minor thing.

If I continue to have this interaction with them, and I continue to be consumed by these foolish things that they keep bringing up, these stupid questions and debates, it will destroy your focus. It will destroy you living out this very purpose for which Christ is dying. There's nothing more important than living out for Him who died for you if you're really believing.

And that's why he says here, those who have believed. One question is have I really believed in God? So, those are the four things we've looked at and I want to continue to look at. And Paul realizes there are all sorts of forces out there to move us away from these purposes.

Look at chapter 1, verse 11. He says here, verse 10, there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers, deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced since they are upsetting whole families.

Have you ever seen that happen? A whole family in a church gets upset? By teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. This is not what they should be insisting upon and they're insisting upon it anyways. Verse 13, this testimony is true.

What's the conclusion then? They're insisting on these things. Rebuke them sharply. That's the idea in verse 9 of warning.

Why? Why do you warn someone to hurt them? No, that they may be sound in the faith. That's what you want. You want people sound in the faith.

I want to be sound in the faith. That's why we warn each other. What's the opposite of them being sound in the faith? Verse 14, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.

So clearly, their devotion is no longer to good works and to the Gospel and that which is trustworthy. Their devotion is now to that which is a myth. And Paul's saying they've got to be rebuked sharply.

You've got to take care of this. We know 2 Corinthians 11.3, Paul says there, I'm afraid for you as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, so will some of your thoughts be led astray from a simple and pure devotion to Christ. That's what our enemy wants to do.

So, let's consider these four things a little further. Number one, insisting on the Gospel on sound doctrine. Isn't it a glorious thing that the Bible expects if you preach on Christ, if you preach on these truths here in verses 4-7, the Bible expects it will make people devoted for good works.

Isn't that encouraging? That's encouraging. Sometimes we can overthink it. What is it that people really need? And Paul's just saying you've got to lift up the Lord Jesus Christ.

You've got to lift up the truth. And he says to insist on these things. He doesn't say casually think about it, but rather very carefully think about, meditate on, and dwell on these realities.

And he gives us some of these. I mean, verse 4-7 is jam-packed with glorious realities. You could say in verse 3, he talks about our total depravity there, how dead we were.

And then in verse 4, when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us. So we've got the Lord's sovereignty there and God's kindness to us, His enemies. And here, He saved us not because of works.

So wait, insisting on you're saved not because of works makes people want to be devoted to good works? Yeah, because you're free. I'm not trying to do these things to merit salvation and earn God's favor, but because I've been saved not because of works, I all the more want to be zealous for good works and serve the Lord. Here Paul says in chapter 3, verse 2, he talks about showing perfect courtesy toward all people.

How do we get people to show perfect courtesy toward all people? Maybe you could insist on verse 4. The goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior. You know what? A good dose of God's goodness and loving kindness will jolt someone who's harsh, rude, and turn them into a person who shows perfect courtesy towards all people. The Gospel affects, it presses our conscience, it convicts us seeing Christ.

We want to love as Christ is loved. Let's think of a couple other things here. This is what Paul's talking about insisting on.

Insisting on these things. And here we have this one sentence in the Greek, verse 4 to 7, which is a capsule of the Gospel. And he mentions here, he talks about regeneration and justification.

Verse 5, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, according to His own mercy, by the washing, I think that's a spiritual washing, of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. So the believers give Him the Holy Spirit, who He poured out on us. And Paul uses these words richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified, there we have justification, by His grace, not our works, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

So you know, you're trying to be devoted to good works. You feel kind of exhausted. You feel like you lack the power.

You feel weak. And then someone insists on the truth that when He saved you, He poured out His Holy Spirit upon you richly. Do you think that would help you be more devoted to good works or discourage you? If I insisted on you that He poured out the Spirit on you richly, that should all the more give you confidence there is the strength, there is the power to go do these things and believe God.

The strength is not lacking. The problem is I'm relying on my own strength. I need to look to Him through whom I can do all things.

Him who strengthens me. Insisting on the Gospel. You think about the doctrine of regeneration.

What a comfort it was when I came to this church and I started to hear about who I was in Christ. That my old man was dead. That I was a new man.

Do you think people insisting on regeneration helped me be more devoted to good works or completely distracted and discouraged and devoted to other things? It made me more devoted to good works. I knew I'm actually a new creature. My old man's dead.

I'm a new man. There's been a spiritual resurrection. There's been a washing by the Spirit of God.

As you get that insisted upon, it increases people's zeal. You don't insist on that? You insist we're just so wicked and we can't do any good? Do you think that encourages people in the church to go be zealous for good works? No. They sit around being zealous for mourning and thinking about oh, how bad I am.

We don't have anything richly, much less the Spirit richly. That doesn't help. It doesn't do good.

There's so many things here. You could preach a sermon on verse 4, verse 5, verse 6, verse 7, and all of those sermons emphasizing the Gospel, it would all the more bring about in people's lives, insisting on those things, it would make those who really believed in God, as verse 8 says, be careful to devote themselves to good works. The Gospel would drive obedience.

So the second one, basically going through the four things again, thinking about them a little more in depth. The second one, meaning command exhortation, is verse 9. So remember, he said to insist on. Here he says what not to insist on, but what to avoid.

Avoid, and then he gives a few things here. Avoid foolish controversies. Avoid genealogies.

Avoid dissensions. Avoid quarrels about the law. Why? They are unprofitable and worthless.

So let's think of these things for a moment. For one, when you hear avoid genealogies, does he mean avoid all genealogies? No, I mean, what's Matthew 1.1 say? Matthew 1.1 says the genealogy of Jesus Christ. So clearly, he's not saying avoid all genealogies.

And clearly, he's not saying avoid all controversies. Does he say avoid controversies? No, he says avoid what type of controversy? A foolish. It's foolish.

It's unprofitable. It's not excellent. There are many controversies that if we don't engage in, it would be to our fault and wrong.

But there are many controversies people engage in that are foolish. Obviously, they're convinced it's not foolish or they wouldn't be engaging in it. But they're lacking discernment to distinguish what is most

excellent and what is unprofitable.

So, taking a stand for the Gospel is clearly something we must do. So foolish controversies. That phrase, the literal puts it foolish questions.

The Holman puts foolish debates. It's just a debate. It's one of those things.

If you have Facebook, you go on Facebook and you see that question that someone asks, and the first thought that comes to your mind is that's just foolish. Why would anyone want to spend time debating about it? And you assume there's no way they've got anyone commenting on this post or liking this post, right? And then you scroll down and you see 300 likes! 50 shares! What's going on here? This is so foolish. And then you see some brethren in our own church engaging in the dialogue, not necessarily warning.

Some are there warning. And you're thinking, good, they're warning this person. That's good.

Hopefully, they're doing it in a right way. It could be better in a private message. Who knows? But if they're doing it publicly, a public warning seems sufficient, right? They're not doing it in a closed door.

But you sit there and you think, if I start getting into this foolish debate, how much time will be consumed? I'll go to bed thinking about it. I'll wake up thinking about it as I read my Bible. In the morning, it's going to distract me.

Now, on the flip side, maybe it's a controversy that's not foolish. It's something you should give a whole lot of thought to. And you should be thinking about it in your bed.

How does the Bible respond and deal with this? So we have to distinguish these things. Tim is, I'm assuming, in Genesis again today, but he was in Genesis last week. And you just think about it in the garden.

That whole question put to Eve. Did God actually say, you shall not eat of any tree in the garden? She should have righted and blocked the devil. Unfriend, block, whatever.

I'm not going to entertain that. I'm not going to think about it. I'm not going to waste my time and energy on that question.

Because who knows where that's going to lead. What did Paul say in 2 Corinthians 11-3? I'm afraid that your thoughts will be led astray. All of us have the capacity in our weakness to be deceived and led astray by something that is utterly foolish.

And we waste our energy and time. We're no longer devoted to good works. And ultimately, it leads some to apostasy.

So, genealogies, dissensions, strife. In Galatians 5, it's a fruit of the flesh. All this foolish stuff that's creating is just strife, bitterness, anger.

It's not helping anyone. You think about strife that happens in the Bible. In 1 Corinthians 3, people were getting all involved with I follow Paul, I follow Apollos.

And he says there's strife among you. It's foolish. Trying to say who you follow.

In Acts 23, think about the hope of the resurrection of the dead. That's something you should take a stand for. And he does there, and it says when he did, the dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the assembly was divided.

Well, truth about the resurrection should divide. Think about quarrels about the law. He says here, avoid quarrels about the law.

Disputes relating to how we interpret the Mosaic law. There's a lot of that going on. Paul's encouragement in Romans 14 is not spend a whole lot of time quarreling and disputing about it, but his conclusion is one brother is convinced in his own mind to honor this day, the other brother is not.

Each before his own master is going to stand or fall. Quarrels about the law. In some ways, you could say now quarrels about the New Testament.

Think about issues that have come up in the last years where people want to say it's a gray area and we believe the Bible doesn't teach it's a gray area. One that wasn't just a few years ago was this whole issue of Christians and profanity. And Tim dealt with that on Tuesday night.

He did a Sunday sermon on it. You sit around thinking this is just foolish. Why do Christians want to argue about using profanity? It's foolish.

So you don't even want to spend time with it, but you have to warn those who are being led astray and you realize, man, something's convincing them, deceiving them. We've got to help them. We've got to win them over, hopefully.

Foolish debates. One going on in our culture right now is the whole issue of women preaching to men. Women pastors.

You sit around and you're thinking, I don't want to consume a lot of time thinking about that. The debates of denying eternal punishment. Even people wanting to say they're Christians and they believe it's okay to murder a baby through abortion.

So many different things. I thought I had something else here. I guess one thing that crossed my mind.

You think about here, avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, lineage, who your parents are, what you were born. Is there anything like that going on right now? A whole lot of discussion about genealogy? Yeah, a lot of that. Whatever terms you use, people saying I'm this race and I'm this skin color and I'm all these things.

And there's all of this talk about all of that. Not that there's not a place. But you know what? A lot of it, it leads people into foolish controversies.

And they're not devoted to good works. You know what they're devoted to? They end up becoming devoted to social justice in some extreme in which the Bible does not commend to us. They get led astray.

So these four things, what all they specifically meant in Paul's day right here, what the Jewish myths were, there's just different thoughts on what all those specifically meant back then. But think about how these things could apply in our current day. You've got different things.

Look, not too long ago, there was this whole issue. People wanted to get led astray by visions and angels and stars and different things like that. It happens.

Whatever it may be, watch it take you away from insisting on the Gospel. These foolish things, they cause division. Now we're going to look at the third thing here.

The third command, because we're all in it together, the third command was we must warn those who are going down this path. And people must warn us. And pastors specifically must do this.

Look at Titus 1.9. He's talking about overseers and their qualifications. He must hold firm to the trustworthy Word as taught. Why? So that he may be able to give instruction and sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

So people come along, they're contradicting the sound truth. Someone might come along and they're contradicting the doctrine of the Trinity. They're trying to teach some modalistic view.

We've got to be able to refute that and show people this is an essential thing to the faith. If you deny the Trinity and you continue like that, there's no way you're really a true Christian. You've got a different God than the God of the Bible.

These things. We've got to warn people. Rebuke them sharply.

Wait, is that what 1.13 says? This testimony is true, therefore, rebuke them sharply? But didn't Paul say in 3, v. 1, show perfect courtesy toward all people? It's not a contradiction, right? This one person you're showing perfect courtesy towards, this other person you're sharply rebuking. Why? Love dictates in this situation perfect courtesy. Love demands and truth demands in the other situation a sharp rebuke.

2 Timothy 2.25 Correcting your opponents with gentleness. Why do we correct people? God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth. So we warn people because we want them, we want God to grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth.

And think of it, it's a privilege. It is a privilege that we get to help keep each other on track with maintaining a life of the profitable and the excellent. Right? Isn't that a privilege? We get to be involved in warning each other in these areas that we all might maintain a life profitable with that which is excellent and honors the Lord and be devoted to this purpose of redemption, living our lives zealous for good works for whom Christ has died to bring that about.

This is a privilege. So the fourth thing, thinking a little more about the fourth thing, again, because we're all in it together, we don't just warn people and then warn them and warn them 50,000 times and do nothing about it, but because we're in it together, we realize if we warn someone once, we warn someone twice, and they don't respond, we have to have nothing more to do with them. Because we recognize it will corrupt.

It will corrupt me individually. It will corrupt the body as a whole. So Paul says that there.

Verse 10, they stir up division. You warn them once, twice, and you have nothing more to do with them. Nothing more to do with them.

Why? They're unprofitable. Worthless, it says. That's not my words.

That's Paul's. I mean, it's amazing how strong Paul says things. Verse 16 of chapter 1. He says some people profess to know God, but they deny Him by their works.

And what's Paul call them? He says they're detestable. Look, I don't think I've ever called someone detestable. Right? I mean, you don't say that.

But you know in Revelation, it says some of those who will inherit the lake of fire, it says that same word. Those who are detestable. It's detestable to bear the name of Christ and deny Him by your works.

And he says they're unfit for any good work. These people who profess. But their works don't line up.

Their works are devoted to foolish controversies, not devoted to the Gospel and being zealous for good works. So, think of this. Why do people not live out v. 10 and 11 often? As for a person who stirs up division after warning them once and twice have nothing more to do with him, v. 11.

Look at what v. 11 says. Knowing. Knowing that such a person is warped and sinful, he is self-condemned.

You know what often the issue is? People lack the knowledge and discernment to know this person is poison. If they knew that person was self-condemned, would they go and follow? If you knew the Titanic would sink ahead of time, would you board a condemned ship that was going to sink? Would you hop on board? You wouldn't. But without the knowledge, people go on board.

People give in to certain things. They don't know this person is warped and sinful, but the person, when their eyes are opened and they see, they're convinced through the Scripture, they're convinced through the warning that you gave them that wow, this really is a big deal. They have this knowledge.

Now all of a sudden they realize I don't want anything more to do with that person. This is going to drag me down, corrupt me, destroy me. So, people could say there's two dangers here.

You could be too broad in what you allow in. Right? I think that's more the danger today. People are too broad.

They're letting too many things in that they don't realize this is foolish over here. The other danger is being too narrow. Right? You've got some people that are way too narrow.

They're saying all these certain things are unprofitable and wrong and not sound doctrine when these are good, genuine brothers who have sound doctrine, and they're dividing in too critical of a way. We've got to stay out of both ditches and keep ourselves in the middle. You think about a self-condemned person.

What's one way to know they're self-condemned? Well, Paul says here, you warn them once, twice, they have nothing more to do. One of the greatest evidences someone is condemning themselves is they don't want to hear correction. They don't want to hear it.

Their ears are closed. They don't want to hear it. Now what does it look like to have nothing more to do with someone who's full of foolish controversies, dissensions? They're just a divisive person.

And you've come to recognize that. Say you didn't recognize it and you didn't see the negative impact it was having on your life and how it was corrupting you. Say we didn't see something in our church and we realized this is bad.

Paul says have nothing more to do with him. Clearly, in the church context, that means put them out of the church. Where do I think people fail in applying this verse? What's the new realm that we have to deal with that we did not have 30 years ago? Social media.

Brethren, I scratch my head sometimes. We all do in our elders' meetings. Some of the stuff that goes up on Facebook, I don't even have a Facebook, but I look on my wife's sometimes trying to observe what's going on.

Sometimes we scratch our heads at some of the stuff that's taking place. And you think what on earth is this going? Why is this happening? Why not have nothing more to do with them? You know why? It's so easy in the click of a mouse with curiosity, you want to know what's going on because you like conflict, you like debate. It's so easy.

Just click it. It's like a lust. Some people, they lust and they go view filth.

Some people are lustful to get involved in these type of things. And the Internet has created a perfect platform by which you can consume your life being consumed in debates and foolish controversies and things that ultimately don't matter and aren't going to help you be devoted to good works and live out the purpose of redemption. And your Master and my Master will come back one day.

And we want to be the stewards who have used our time and resources wisely for the Lord. And so you've got to figure out how that might fit in your life. But brethren, if you look on your Facebook, and I know we pick on Facebook.

We have to pick on Facebook. So much happens on Facebook in time and knowledge. It's a newspaper subscription.

You're subscribing to a newsletter from all these different people. It's like you're getting 40 letters a day from all these people updating you on their life. If one's unprofitable and you're doing a paid subscription, what do you do? You cancel it.

You don't want to waste your money on these things. It's amazing in the pastoral epistles how many times there are warnings given. 1 Timothy 1 talks here.

Charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which do what? Promote good works? No. Promote speculations. Rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

Verse 6, certain persons by swerving from these they've wandered away into profitable discussion. No. Vain discussion.

Desiring to be teachers of the law without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions. It's so easy to be confident, right? I know what I'm saying is right. You could be dead wrong.

1 Timothy 6, 3-5, if anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, this teaching goes hand in hand with being godly. This person is puffed up with conceit. He understands nothing.

He has an unhealthy craving for controversy. Do you get that? You want to make sure that's mortified. An unhealthy craving for controversy.

There are professing Christian websites designed to create in you an unhealthy craving for controversy. And for quarrels about words which produce good works? Nope. Envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

You go to 2 Timothy 3. It talks about people here, people being understand this. Verse 1, in the last days, there will be times of difficulty. People will be lovers of stealth, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient.

Just a long list. Verse 7, always learning and never able to arrive at the knowledge of the truth. Just as Geniz and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also opposed the truth.

Men corrupted in mind, disqualified regarding the faith. They will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all. Isn't that interesting? That tends to be what happens, right? Some foolish controversy or some person starts stirring up division.

In the majority, it kind of becomes pretty obvious. Like that's bad. And that's a blessing.

Because then when stuff gets dealt with in a church, there's general unity because the majority, they see. It's so obvious. This is wrong.

This is poison. We've got to deal with this. There's so many other verses in the pastoral epistles.

But think about in the New Testament. Think about in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians 15.

Do not be deceived. Bad company corrupts good morals. And in the context, a bad company is none other than false teachers who deny the resurrection.

Do you think denying that there's a resurrection makes people want to be devoted to good works when they think there's not going to be a resurrection? No, it does not. That's why Paul at the end of the chapter, he says, therefore, meaning look back, because the resurrection will happen, therefore, be steadfast and movable always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord, your labor is not in vain. Paul knows you've got to believe the resurrection.

You've got to believe those believers who died, there will be a resurrection. Your works do matter. And then you will be steadfast and movable.

Or you think about Hebrews 12. We've mentioned this verse, but he talks there about a root of bitterness springing up and causing trouble, and by it, many become defiled. And he's quoting, it seems, Deuteronomy 29, which is a person is who the root of bitterness is.

A person who says, I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my own heart. It's a person with a false view on eternal security. A person who believes, I can continue in sin that grace may abound.

And the writer of Hebrews is saying, you see it too, that no one holding to that teaching rises up in your church and by it, many will become defiled. Then he mentions the sexually immoral and unholy, like Esau. So you've got to put these people out.

You've got to not be deceived about bad company. Many people do get deceived. Romans 16, I appeal to you brothers, watch out for those who cause division and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught.

Avoid them. Why? For such persons do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but they serve their own appetites. They've got an appetite for unhealthy controversy.

And by smooth talk and flattery, what do they do? They deceive the hearts of the naive. Isn't that interesting? Because Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, do not be deceived. Bad company with false teachers corrupts good morals.

Well, here he says, you know what? There are naive people who will get deceived. So if us as leadership does not deal with these type of things, there are people who could be naive in the church and new Christians who could get led astray. First, we know very well, 1 Corinthians 5, it talks about cleansing out this person who's leavened for the sake of the church as a whole for the whole lump.

So these things are not strange. They're all over the Bible. Well, in closing here, think of this.

Someone could say, man, this is harsh. This is narrow. This is common sense.

Let me illustrate something. I thought about the workplace. Christian, there's a purpose of redemption.

Be zealous for good works. There's things that get in the way of those good works that you must deal with. Does the same thing happen in work? Listen to this article.

This is written on divisive people in the workplace. Divisive people are destructive and toxic. They're like an infection which drags down morale and then performance and has potentially serious repercussions for the business.

Deal with them as soon as you notice or the problem is brought to your attention. If you act early, you may be able to coach the person into becoming a productive team member. If you are unable to do so, you may be able to isolate them and stop them from infecting the team.

If not, permanent separation may be the only answer. That's a guy at a company writing that. Here this person is.

They're being divisive. What does he say? Warn them and hopefully you'll be able to coach them into becoming a productive team member. If that doesn't happen, you've got to get rid of them.

See, this is very common sense. That's for a business trying to get the most physical money and treasure on this earth. Brethren, we are Christians trying to live a hundredfold lives for our Master who shed His blood on the cross for us to save us to be zealous for good works.

He paid the price to secure our release from captivity that we would be devoted to good works and living for Him who in His loving kindness and goodness came and saved us. How can we not want to live these things out? A few bad apples will ruin everything. But does it in the workplace? Obviously all the more in the spiritual realm.

The Bibles are authority. We don't need some article from the Internet in a workplace. The Bibles are standard.

But my point of reading that was to show you this isn't some strange thing. This isn't strange. A couple minutes.

I guess one thing I wanted to make sure I emphasized is this. I'm afraid one of the leading reasons behind people failing to be zealous for good works is their refusal to avoid foolish controversies to a greater extent. So ask yourself this question.

How much time and energy do you put into that which is foolish? Obviously, this isn't just in the spiritual realm. Your whole life is spiritual. I shouldn't say in the spiritual realm.

Meaning, not just in the areas where you're thinking about that which is biblical, but your whole life. Because Paul connects here one of the things that will keep you from being more devoted to good works, one thing that could lead you to being unfruitful is a refusal to cut off those who engage in foolish controversies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law. And you want to come to grips and know they're condemning themselves by their behavior.

I need to have nothing more to do with them. I've already graciously warned them once. I've warned them twice.

Why warn them 50,000 times and allow my energy to be zapped? And again, our social media age has made this all the easier to fall into not having nothing more to do with people. I mean, we mentioned just a few weeks ago at prayer meeting, Jeff and I were here and we mentioned the thing about a person we recently disciplined out of the church and this person constantly is still commenting and liking on many of you on your Facebooks. And then some of you have removed her and now she's trying to re-add you.

We are not to associate with such a person. Not just in IRL, real life, but even in the digital world. You remove them.

You don't need to see what they're doing. You don't need to know what's going on. You've got to be devoted to good works, not consumed with what's going on in their life.

And for them to feel the sting of the discipline, they need to feel that I can't go and view everyone in the church and what's going on in their life. They've cut me off. If half the church doesn't remove them on Facebook, they sure don't feel that cut off.

Right? They don't feel the sting. The shame that should come with it. So is there someone or some teaching that you need to avoid? Or, put it this way, is there someone or some teaching you are avoiding that you should not be? It's warning you of error in your life.

It's a sharp rebuke. You're being offended by it and you're thinking I need to avoid that when you actually don't need to avoid that. You don't want to say I need to avoid something when it's actually sound.

And then you've got to ask, are you even sound enough to make a judgment like that? Do I know my Bible? Cool. That's why we need each other. I'll close with a Spurgeon quote on this text.

Charles Spurgeon says this, Our days are few and far better spent in doing good than in disputing over matters which are at best of minor importance. The old school men did a world of mischief by their incessant discussion of subjects of no practical importance. You know, this teaching the kids stuff that it didn't really practically matter.

And our churches suffer much from petty wars over difficult to understand points and unimportant questions. After everything has been said that can be said, neither party is any wiser, and therefore the discussion no more promotes knowledge than love. And it is foolish to sow and sow barren a field.

Questions upon points wherein Scripture is silent, upon mysteries which belong to God alone, upon prophecies of doubtful interpretation, and upon mere modes of observing human ceremonials are all foolish and wise men avoid them. Our business is neither to ask nor answer foolish questions, but to avoid them altogether. And if we observe the Apostles' precept to be careful to maintain good works, we shall find ourselves far too much occupied with profitable business to take much interest in unworthy, contentious, and needless strivings.

There are, however, some questions which are the reverse of foolish, which we must not avoid, but fairly and honestly meet. Such as these, do I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and I'm renewed in the Spirit of my mind? Am I walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit? Am I growing in grace? Does my conversation adorn the doctrine of God my Savior? Am I looking for the coming of the Lord and watching as a servant should do who expects his Master? What more can I do for Jesus? Let us be peacemakers and endeavor to lead others both by our precept and example to avoid foolish questions. You know, Tim's sermon last week and no doubt whatever he's bringing this week, that controversy is something you've got to deal with head on.

Let's pray. Father, we need You, Lord, help us to live this out in whatever ways. Lord, some of the brethren might not be living this out.

Lord, I pray You would make it clear to them. Lord, I don't know what's going on in people's lives. I don't know what intake the majority of the brethren here even have apart from what they're hearing in our own congregation.

But Lord, I just pray You'd give them discernment to help them avoid that which could lead them away from being devoted to good works. And Lord, we pray You'd help us to all the more comprehend the glorious Gospel of Your Son. That all the more that would drive us to be devoted to good works.

Lord Jesus, You're worthy. We pray You'd help us to do such. Give us more of Your Spirit richly today, we ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

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