

Thursday, November 23, 2023 • Read Titus 3:9–11

Questions from the Scripture text: What sort of disputes is Titus to avoid? What other three things is he to avoid? For what two reasons? Whom is Titus to reject (v10)? After doing what? How many times? Why—what three things are true about such a man (v11)?

What must a pastor do, in addition to affirming the truth? Titus 3:9–11 prepares us for the second serial reading in public worship on the Lord's Day. In these three verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **in addition to affirming the truth, a pastor must avoid uses of the Bible that are not in keeping with the Bible.**

Avoid misusing the Bible. The church in Crete had begun to lose the gospel, as was evidenced by a people who were not zealous for good works (v8), thereby giving evidence that the actual grace of God had not saved them (v3–7). So, as part of his reformation work, Titus was to “affirm constantly” the truths of the gospel.

But not all “Bible study” is affirming the twin truths that salvation is all of grace and that it makes a revolutionary difference in the works that people do. There was “Bible study” (or teaching, or preaching) that Titus was to avoid! We can see that what the apostle warns against in v9 includes much that would have claimed to be Bible study, Bible teaching, or Bible preaching by the inclusion of “genealogies” and “the law” in v9.

How do we know if the Bible is being used properly? Well, if it's being used in a biblical way by biblical people is one test. Scripture is written in words and phrases and clauses and sentences, presented in several different types of literature. All Scripture must be understood in a manner consistent with the grammar, and with the point that that particular style of literature is making within the particular part of the literature. Additionally, every part of Scripture must be understood in light of the whole rest of the Scripture. This is to understand the Bible in a biblical way. Perhaps the most instructive way to learn this is to develop skill in understanding the New Testament's use of the Old Testament. We have also already learned, in this particular book, that the Lord Who gave us the Scripture has also ordained particular men (cf. 1:5) to be teachers of Scripture, and that these must first have submitted to and learned from the ones whom the Lord ordained before them (cf. 1:9, “as he has been taught”).

But those are NOT the tests of correct Bible study that the apostle gives here in 3:9. The test that He gives here is whether the Lord is using the Bible study/teaching/preaching to produce wisdom in the heart, love in the church, and growth toward God.

“Foolish disputes” refers to teaching that produces not wisdom but folly. The more someone is engaged in them, the more his speech and conduct display things like pride, self-righteousness, laziness, indulgence of the flesh, etc.

“Contentions” and “strivings” are, literally, fighting words. This isn't just referring to divisive doctrines (the truth has to divide from whatever error this is!) but rather personal animosity. Teaching that leads to a despising of one another—that is being weaponized to turn people against each other.

“Unprofitable” and “useless” refers to that which does not bring advantage to the hearer. It doesn't point him to the kind and merciful God, Who saves us not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to His mercy (cf. v3). It doesn't affirm that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works (v8). It is especially this antinomianism (“grace” without obedience or holiness, setting “grace” against God's law) that is being warned against as “unprofitable and useless,” because it is the counterpart of “good and profitable” from v8.

God's Word, employed God's way, will be used of the Spirit to do God's work. If Titus is to be a faithful pastor, he must avoid using the Bible in any other way.

Avoid men who misuse the Bible. Understanding v9 is the key to identifying the man in v10–11. He's not just making mistakes of how to interpret the Bible. That would, indeed, be unprofitable. But the “divisive” man in v10 handles the Bible in a way that reflects his own character, rather than God's character.

The Bible is a means by which the Holy Spirit works into Christians that Christ-like character that they are to work out with fear and trembling (cf. Php 2:12–13). But we can see from v11 that the divisive man's teaching doesn't seek to bring out of the Scripture that which is from God; rather, as the divisive man handles the Bible, what comes out is an indication of that which is in himself!

The man himself is divisive (v10). The person himself is warped and sinning (v11). There's no reason to heed someone whose teaching is an expression of himself; he is already self-condemned (end of v11). The preacher/teacher who is hoping for a creation-level miracle of God in his hearers (cf. 2Cor 4:6) will refuse to preach from what is in himself, because he is eager that the Spirit would use the preaching to show what is in Christ Jesus the Lord (cf. 2Cor 4:5).

Not only is such a man not to be heeded, but the apostle actually commands Titus not to have much patience with him. The implication does seem to be that this “rejection” is with regard to the man's being considered for the office of elder, and the abruptness of the protocol shows just how important is the character of the teachers and teaching in the church. They get two (!) chances, and then they're done. Out of consideration for the teaching office.

If the Lord doesn't want us to have such teachers, then we may be sure that He doesn't want any of us to be such people. May He give to His church such teachers and teaching that will be used by His Spirit to save graciously, sanctifyingly, and productively in the lives of His people. So, may He give to His church to obey this portion of His Word.

What are some ways that you are tempted to misuse the Bible? What is the right way of using it? Whom has Jesus given to you to model and teach that right way of using it? What are some tests that this passage gives you for whether or not the Bible is being used in the right way? Why is it so important that the elders in the church be of proper character in their life and manner in their teaching? How can you, before God's face or in interaction with them, be a help to your elders in this area of their ministry?

Sample prayer: Lord, we thank You for Your good Word—genealogies, law, gospel, all of it! Forgive us for how we have used it in a way that produced folly in our hearts rather than wisdom. Forgive us for when we have used Your Word in a way that produced hatred in our relationship rather than love. Forgive us for when we have used Your Word in a way that made no difference in our lives. Truly, such failure comes not from Your Word, but from within us ourselves. But in You is all grace for us to forgive us and cleanse us. So, forgive us for Christ's sake, and help us by Your Spirit, we ask in Jesus's Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP32AB “What Blessedness” or TPH426 “How Vast the Benefits Divine”

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Titus 3 verse 9 through 11. Let us be careful what we do with our minds. And our hearts. As we hear this red, because we are offering to god, This hearing of his word. As worship. But avoid foolish disputes. Genealogies. Contentions and strivings about the law, For they are unprofitable and useless.

Reject a device of man. After the first and second admonition. Knowing that such a person is warped and sinning. Being self-condemned. So far the reading of god's inspired and And earned toward

In last week's portion. After having described. The grace by which god saves us. Not through righteous works, works of righteousness that we have done, but Because of his mercy, because of the Kindness and love of god. Um, that appeared towards man. When god, who is our savior appeared as jesus?

Who is our savior? And the kindness of love and love of god, that appeared in history in jesus. Also appears in the life of everyone whom he is saving. As the holy spirit gives us regeneration and renews us. Gives us eyes, life light to our minds life to our hearts.

To see. And respond to ourselves correctly by running away from ourselves. And anything, we might have thought we could do. And, more than that. Even to see and respond to the lord. Jesus rightly. To see that he is god, he is our savior. He became man, for us, he obeyed perfectly in the place of sinners, he died sacrificially, fully atoning for them.

As we run to him. And so, that was uh, the bulk of the faithful saying that Titus and other elders who he was two ordained. Were to affirm constantly but also that those who have believed in god, The rest of that verse 8 there. That those who have believed in god should be careful to maintain good works.

That god who saves by this grace? Makes a transformative difference in the actual works of the lives. Of those who whom he saved, so that they are no longer. The way they are described in versus Verse 3. But they become careful to maintain, good works. As verse 8 says, And so, in order to teach this gospel of salvation, by grace alone, and by a grace, That makes a transformative difference.

There are not only those things that Titus as a preacher as a pastor as an elder is to constantly affirm and all of the elders then whom he has to ordain. And then to reordained by them and so on. Through the ages of christ's work in the church by his spirit, that they all those elders are to affirm.

There isn't just that, which there to affirm but that also, which they are to avoid. And that's the subject of verse 9 through 11. Avoiding a wrong teaching. Verse 9, and then recognizing by those who engage in such wrong teaching, That those who engage in the wrong teaching are wrong teachers.

Who then are to be rejected. Uh, buy and from the church and especially then. Remembering that this has given to Titus given to Elders, who are already ordained and installed that they are to be watchful against such teachers in the church. So wrong teaching, verse 9 and wrong teachers?

Verse 10 through 11.

So it's helpful to us, when we think about the wrong teaching in verse 9, to notice that, they teach the bible, No wrong teachers. Probably do teach things other than the bible as well. But it's important that we see. That they teach the bible. Uh, so that when somebody is doing Bible studies or bible teaching, or bible preaching, That we not automatically assume that, just because they're using the bible and talking a lot about it that it is a right sort of teaching.

How do we know that they're using the bible? Well, Genealogies and the law there in verse 9. Uh, the two places where it actually describes the content, That is being mis taught. Uh, both are things that come from the scriptures. And so we know right away that not all bible, study is good.

And in fact, Not only are we supposed to have? The right sort of teaching and preaching of the bible, then over against the wrong sort. But as verses 10 and 11, tell us there are wrong sorts of teachers. Including if we are, Remembering from. Uh, chapter one. And verse 9.

That. Uh, me by myself and the wrong sort of teacher. That yes, i am to search the scriptures myself and And confirm that these things are so and have genuine individual personal dealings with god and his word. But even the elders were to hold fast the faithful word as they were taught.

Chapter 1 and verse 9. So, We remember that the lord Jesus, who is God, the lord Jesus, who is our only savior, the lord Jesus, who by his spirit has given us his word in the scriptures has also appointed for us a right way, his way of coming into a right knowledge.

Of that, which he teaches in his word. And that is to be taught by those whom he has set over us even an elder. Is. Qualified for his office in part by first, having been a learner One who submitted under teaching. Before he became a teacher. Under his teaching, others submit And so, Uh, we're immediately reminded then.

That one of the best ways or one of the most effective bestest of value judgment that we don't want to give that. One of the most effective ways. Of misunderstanding. The bible is to study it only by ourselves. Or to elevate our personal study over against everyone else. Who teaches But there are then.

There is that a wrong way of studying it for by ourselves and even worse and more deadly, a wrong way of teaching others? Some of the Foolish things that have been done in the church. These last few generations. Having. What it means to me, sort of bible study groups.

Or calling something teaching, where it's a kind of Uh, conversational class in which everyone is just invited to make their comments. Whether the lord Jesus has appointed to be teaching them to be teachers and the church. Or not. Um, very dangerous. Well, what is this wrong sort of Of teaching.

Well. One thing that is probably important to say. Is. The right way of teaching. Um, Is. To understand the bible in the way that the lord Jesus gave it to us. And he's given it to us in words and grammar and phrases and clauses. And he's included various forms of literature, which Make their points in various ways that are specific to those forms of literature in the bible.

And so there's a study of language, which is originates with god and comes to us in the providence of god. And so, there is Uh, linguistic study and literary study. That is important. You can't just take whatever words are there and launch into. Uh, whatever doctrine you can. Make up from it as if god gives us.

The bible is So many salad ingredients and we can Chop it up and mix it. However, we like, for whatever salad or casserole, Uh, you want no. We are to interpret it and understand it. Um, In accord with the matter in which the lord Jesus has given it to us.

But he's also given to us not just the the part that each portion has within that book of the bible. Uh, but he has given us a completed body of scripture. Uh, this is one of the reasons why it is so important that we believe that the holy spirit fulfilled the mission That the lord Jesus said that he was going to send him to do in John 16.

That part of the spirit's mission which was to give to the apostles, the words that remained Uh, for the lord Jesus to tell. His disciples that they couldn't bear at that time, but that Christ when he had ascended And taking his seat on the throne.

Sent his spirit to do. To give those words that remain so that we might have all of the words of Christ. It is an important consequence and corollary of that faithfulness and completion of the scripture that we are now able to read every single. Uh, line of scripture every word of scripture in light of the whole of the bible.

Which is one of the reasons why we no longer need apostles prophets evangelists. The ones who building out from the chief cornerstone, who is the lord Jesus have formed the foundation that Christ himself laid through them. And we no longer need. Immediate new. Special revelation from god because we have an advantage in understanding any part of the bible.

Over against anyone all the way up through the end of the apostolic period. Which is that we are able to read every part of the bible, in light of the whole of the rest of the bible. And god himself in giving us. Uh, the pause and and revelation between the old testament to the new testament.

Has shown us a great mercy. Uh yes, that that pause came and parked as judgment. Upon Israel. But it also came to us in the mercy that when the holy spirit carries

along is sent from christ. Those who by whom the The lord has given us the new testament.

One of the things that he did was give us hundreds of examples, in the New Testament of how the new testament scripture uses the old testament scripture. So that we learn, That the bible is its own chief interpreter. Is its own authoritative interpreter. So that god, Gives us his own word and we don't end up in a place like the papests where we say, well, somebody has to come up with what it means.

So that church does no, god does God, does through his own. Word. And so all of that to say that there is a right way of understanding the bible, There's a right way of teaching the bible. And then a wrong way, of course, would be to take Uh, words out of context or Misuse language or grammar or not recognize what particular form of literature.

A bible book or that part of the bible book is or the place that that passage has within that particular book and the place that that passage has in relation to the rest of the Bible as a whole, that would be one way. But all of that is just bonus for us.

Because there's another way here. Of recognizing, when the bible. Is being misused. And that is, By the character. Uh, in which the teaching is given And the character that. Uh, results from The teaching. First thing we see then here. That identifies a misuse of the bible is foolish disputes.

To use the The transliterated word from which we have a similar English word, moronic disputes. Disputes that produce. Fools. Someone who acts as a fool as he's teaching and there are many who do And you can tell who they are by various proverbs tests. If they are arrogant then they're acting as a fool.

A man who teaches what is from himself? Instead of what is what is from the lord? Who doesn't teach reverently? And submissively before god soberly As an act of worship unto. The lord coming with those whom he is teaching all in humility under the word. They've missed the first part of wisdom.

The fear of the lord is the beginning of wisdom. And there, there is much teaching that displays the folly of mocking and scoffing, you know, these advanced pools in the language of the book of proverbs and then there's teaching that produces fools. Um, Those who have an appearance of wisdom, an appearance of knowledge, a form of religion, Uh but no power to live skillfully wisely lovingly.

Toward god, with all the heart. Love lovingly toward the brother as christ has loved us lovingly toward neighbor as ourselves. Um, When so foolish. Uh, disputes. Disputes that are not the teaching of the salvation, by grace alone. That was described in versus four through seven this carefulness to maintain good works.

As a consequence of the transformative effective grace in us, that was taught in verse 8. But disputes that produce fools. The next things that we see are contentions and strivings, Um, now these are not merely arguing words, they are literally Uh, Fighting words. There is a form of teaching.

Uh, that is sensorious and despising towards others. That merely creates dividing lines, where thoughts are an excuse for hatred and bitterness and animosity. Uh, pride and opposition. Where the point of the distinctions, all teaching includes distinctions. Right, there's always you cannot teach the truth without refuting. The error. There's nothing wrong.

Uh, with Quote, unquote argument. In that respect. Uh, but rather than making distinctions, Between truth and error. There was a form of teaching that makes the primary distinction between those who my love and those who my hate. Those who my honor and those Um, whom i revile and despise That is this striving and contending.

Uh, sort of teaching and it's often Connected, of course, to the foolish dispute that we're talking about earlier. It is an expression of haughtiness. Uh, rather than An expression of humility. Under God. Even teach correct or accurate doctrine. In a way that becomes. This contentious and striving sort of way.

If we are not first and foremost making application towards ourselves, Before we think of how this might apply for the benefit of others. To use the language of christ's own illustration. If we are not, Um, Employing the word or receiving the benefit of the spirit, employing the word to take the log out of our eye, we have no business Talking about the specs and others.

And so, the contentious is driving sort of teaching the coral and fighting sort of teachers, teaching only focuses on what Um, Or. We not only strongly emphasizes whom we should be. Against not just what ideas? Uh, we should be against And so there's a, a wrongness towards self and there's wrongness towards others and the sort of teaching and a wrongness towards god unprofitable.

And useless. You notice this unprofitable useless at the end of verse 9. Corresponds to Um, By contrast versus eight and the affirming constantly, that those who believed in god, should be careful to maintain good works. And then he summarizes. The teaching in verses. Uh, four through eight. As a whole, at the end of verse 8, saying these things are good and profitable to men.

And then you have the contrast in verse 9, verse 9, where he says for they are unprofitable. And useless. And so, Not only then does the wrong teaching have a wrong. Attitude. And is mishandling the words towards ourselves and towards others. But even is useless and empty. Um, With respect to go out.

Such t2 doesn't Uh, point the That here or to the kind and merciful god, who saves us. Our entirely by his own. Merciful grace such teaching, doesn't affirm. That those who have believed in god should be careful to maintain good works. And since that is the line in verse 8, that is especially tied.

Uh, to what is good and profitable. So good and profitable teaching. Says that men should be careful to maintain good works. But teaching that fails. To say that men should be careful to maintain good works is not good is not profitable. Is in the language of verse 9, unprofitable and useless.

But i'm sorry to have to warn you. My dear children. That even in the reformed churches, there is much that Uh, presents itself as the teaching of god's grace. And we'll talk in language like that of versus four through seven. But it describes a grace that That is truncated is cut off.

And doesn't have a transformative effect. Does not produce carefulness to maintain. Good works. And is, in fact. Uh, useless. And unprofitable. Which means it's the sort of teaching. That verse 9 tells us. Elders, must avoid. So, This antinomianism, which Which basically says, Denies the idea that christians will be zealous for good works, denies.

That there will be growth and maturity and grace that there will be actual Uh, identifiable sanctification. In the believer's life. Uh, so Avoid bad teaching, but also avoid bad teachers. And he says, reject. He is talking especially to Titus about does he evaluates? The sort of men and the congregation and the way they teach.

You can often recognize it and the way their wives act towards others. The way their children afterwards, others? Whether god is actually. Blessing their ministry in the home. Uh, to the growth and godliness christian maturity and joy in the lord. Um, He is seeing reject. Uh, as Elder prospects.

Verse 10, but he's Uh, he's also encouraging. Him, isn't he to? To warn. Such such a man. Um, rewards him says to warn him twice. Reject. This person, if the first and second admonition or Uh, warnings, so these are things. That men are to be warned against that we should watch out against.

And if you hear, Someone who's Uh, who teaches in the sort of way that is? Described in verse 9 that you determine then not to take to heart. What they say, even if it's from the bible. Uh, but take to heart. Those who The teaching of those that conforms to verses three through eight and that is not described.

As we have worked through, Uh, verse 9. And this is the sort of man who is divisive. So now the the lord is Helping us understand from where Does the sort of teaching that you see in verse 9 come? And it comes not just from inaccuracy of definitions and grammar and literature.

And contacts and all these things. It actually comes from within the man himself. Contentious and contention and striving contentiousness. And And strife in teaching comes, because the man is divisive. Project a divisive man. Is because the person. Not just the ideas. The person is warped and sinning. Knowing that such a person is warped.

And sinning. And so, god gives you. Uh, the ability the opportunity, the mercy and his providence. Of being able to recognize whom he has excluded as teachers from the church. Um, He uses the word here, self-condemned we recognize, by the way, they present themselves. And the way they're teaching is presented that god already.

Has condemned, then. Has excluded them. Then this of course, is what paul was. So careful to avoid. He's talking in second Corinthians 4. We often make reference to verse 6 that god, who spoke light into darkness. Um, made the light shine to the darkness as caused the light of the knowledge of his glory.

To shine in our hearts, a place of darkness. And he who said in the creation, let there be light. Does by his spirit giving us to know who jesus is. The light of the knowledge of god's glory. In our heart, it makes it to shine in our hearts in the face of jesus christ.

And the verse immediately before that, then second Corinthians 4, verse 5. Paul says. That he makes sure not to preach himself and he those who are with them, we preach not ourselves. But jesus christ, as lord And so there's again this humility this. Preaching and teaching not that, which is in us.

But that, which is from christ. And you can tell the difference, can't you? As you listen to preaching and teaching, and you have the glory of jesus, and the character of jesus, And and then there's another sort of preaching and teaching in which, you know, a bunch of eyes or dotted and teas are crossed.

But it's really the glory of, man. And the character of the man. Which becomes? Um, divisive. And demonstrates that he is. Warped and sinning. And Self-condemned. And so avoiding. Then. Wrong teaching. And wrong teachers. Is important. In order that we may constantly affirm. And constantly believe. The right. Doctrine.

That we were given in verses 4 through 8. For the lord help us and conform us to christ. By the ministry of his spirit. Using his word rightly. Even upon the lips of those whom he has appointed for us. Which in God's providence to you. Means your daddy. Uh, your mom who also gives you instruction of from the lord.

And the elders. He has given you in your local church. Let's pray. Our graceless. God and our heavenly father. We thank you. For such careful helpful. Instruction. As you have provided here in these three verses. If we pray, lord, that you would continue to proclaim christ to us from your word.

That we would know him and rest in him. And be made like him. By the ministry of your spirit. Please help me. Because i continue to minister to. These children, you have given me. In this congregation. To which you have called. And lord grant that christ would be proclaimed.

That christ would be known. Trust it. And that christ will be honored in the difference. That he makes and those who believe in him. We ask in his name. Amen.