

## Titus 3:9-15

This week's paragraph finds us wrapping up our study of Titus (Titus 3:9-15). As we think of these last words to Titus, it is important to put them in relation to 1 and 2 Timothy. Paul writes 1 Timothy and Titus at the same time. Second Timothy is written about 4-5 years later. First Timothy and Titus are a little more optimistic in tone than 2 Timothy. Second Timothy is less optimistic as to what the future might hold for the apostle. Paul knows in 2 Timothy that his death is imminent. Here in Titus, he appears to be making plans. In 2 Timothy, he has finished the race.

In Titus 3:9 Paul continues to unpack the teaching that contradicts the gospel. Such teaching is unprofitable and worthless, yet if it were not attractive and pleasing, it would not be a threat to the church! Such people are to be rebuked, and if unrepentant, removed (vv. 10, 11). Their conduct reflects a non-submissive posturing. Their works deny the gospel. Their conduct does not adorn the gospel. Truly, there is pain in all of this. Those removed were a part of the fellowship, the family, and the teaching. They started well. They professed to know God. They were in leadership. They were instructing the church. Yet, their hearts were turned. They heard the hiss of the serpent, "Yea, hath God said?" They began to bend their ears and slowly, almost imperceptibly, they turned. They failed. They were shipwrecked. Souls were upset. Souls were set adrift. Souls were left unguarded and as a result they were removed from the believing community. What happened? Bluntly put, they no longer believed that **JESUS works**. Does it really matter that we align with and openly confess Jesus (2 Tim. 1:8)? Does it matter that we follow the pattern of sound words (2 Tim. 1:13, 14)? Does it matter that we continue in the gospel (2 Tim. 3:10) and **PREACH THE WORD** (2 Tim. 4:2)? Let me ask you one question, "What do you think?"

We would much rather hear the sound of celebration rather than the blare of battle, yet throughout the Christian life we must live as single-minded soldiers, rule-abiding athletes, hardworking farmers, and careful-cutting surgeons (2 Tim. 2:1-6, 15). As much as we long to set down the sword, such will never be until Jesus returns and thoroughly sets things right. Paul knew this and felt the emotionally loneliness that comes from keeping the main things the main thing. Yet, here we are.

The Elders of a local church are to protect the gospel internally and proclaim the gospel externally. You, as a church, are to make sure the Elders you appoint are determined and driven to keep the main thing the main thing. If left to chance and the sentinels sleep, tragedy will visit the church. If the Elders do not guard the gospel like a single-minded soldier, a rule-abiding athlete, a hardworking farmer, and a careful-cutting surgeon (2 Tim. 2:1-5), then heartbreak awaits the church.

Verse 14 really sits as a potent reminder as to the **MELODIC LINE** of this Letter, "Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful." In his final words, he says **JESUS works**.

One of the **GOSPEL FRUITS** of the **JESUS SEED** is the helping of those with urgent needs. Such assistance is fruitful. It is of interest to see the word unfruitful. The word "fruit" does not occur in Titus and this is the only occurrence of the word "unfruitful" in Titus. Yet, the idea of fruit pervades the entire Letter. Why? Because at the center of the Christian life is **CHRIST!** Folks, **JESUS works!**

The gospel of Jesus Christ radically transforms us into something we could never imagine or create. The gospel enables us to extend to others comfort. We can pull people in as they are and call them family. It does not require or demand that they be perfect.

This is the good work. This is what we are to do our best at and devote ourselves to. It is all saying the same thing. You and I as a believing community must work hard at pulling people in, treating them as family, and receiving them as they are. Why? Because this is the GOSPEL FRUIT from the JESUS SEED.

It should be nigh impossible for us to read and study the Letter to Titus and through Titus to his church, us, and not see with an increasing degree of clarity the inseparably connection between the JESUS SEED and its GOSPEL FRUIT. Such fruit cannot be measured nor stopped, but such fruit is inevitable and adorns the gospel. Such fruit sits like ornaments on a Christmas tree. When we begin to see the gospel for what it is, we cannot help approaching life like a small child on Christmas Eve. We go to bed unable to sleep waiting for and longing after the dawning of a new day.

To be sure, life is pain and anyone telling you otherwise is selling something, but is there not a joy that captures our hearts and arrests our attention? Where do we find this joy? What is this joy? It is nowhere and none other than JESUS himself! Jesus is our joy! It is as we delight in the working of the Holy Spirit in us and through us that we begin to see and feel the only begotten Son of God whom he sent to set things right.

The day is quickly approaching when the Father will once again send his Son into the world to set things right. When Jesus comes, he will thoroughly straighten all that is crooked in this broken and empty world.

Yet, until then we can know and experience the joy for which we were designed when we come to see such joy in the person and work of Jesus. All of creation rushes toward this one incredible and breathtaking moment when we will stand before God and finally see the power of the gospel given to us, worked in and through us, to those around us! Praise his lovely name!

Friends, **JESUS** works!

