

Tonight, we are going to read these last few verses of Paul's letter to Titus, and we'll also do a review of the mountain peak points that Paul made throughout.

[REVIEW SESSION]:

Let's go ahead and read! Main Reading: **Titus** 3:9-15

v. 9 — "...avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless."

There is a difference in a **foolish** argument and a **fruitful** argument.

Some people, when they ask questions about God, the Bible, or Christianity... have no intention of *actually* listening to your response or explanation.

Instead, they ask "gotcha!" questions intended to **stump** you—questions to distract you from the main thing.

Questions like: *Can God make a rock so big that He can't lift it?*

Or, why do you eat shellfish when the Bible says not to?

Or, who was Cain's wife?

[Chuck Smith says: "I'm always suspicious of a man who is interested in another man's wife."]

Now, someone *might* come along and *genuinely* ask these questions, searching for an answer...

But, *usually*, people aren't sincere when they ask this sort of stuff...

and it's up to us to **discern** whether or not a conversation is worthwhile. **Proverbs** 26:4-5

Unfortunately, you will run into people, Christians and non, who have a tendency to *major* on **minors**.

They become *too* concerned with issues that, when push comes to shove, only matter but so much.

[Day/time of worship. Sunday school. Church property. Length of terms for leadership. Flowers in the sanctuary. Pews vs. chairs. Covid. Vaccines. Diets.]

It's not that these issues are *totally* unimportant...because many of them *do* have meaning...

but they don't determine the state of someone's **soul**.

In a **hostile** environment, like Crete, the church wouldn't have the luxury of wasting time on little stuff.

Or think about Christians in China or Ukraine...

they don't have time to have heated debates about the end times or Adam's belly button...

Instead, they are *so* focused on things like introducing the **Gospel** to people, distributing **Bibles** in places where it is illegal, and **protecting** people in the congregation.

But, in our free society, we have the luxury of entertaining and allowing **controversy**.

If you wanted to, you could go start a new denomination over *just about* anything.

But Paul warned Titus to keep away from these *silly* arguments.

While preparing for this study, I came across a story about...

A man who developed the habit of making every issue a salvation issue. Then, finally, when he was much older, he camped-out in an isolated cabin in the mountains with only his Bible. When got back from the trip, he had learned to have a proper love for other Christians. He quit debating every little detail. When he explained what caused this drastic change, he said, "You can determine which Scriptures you will take to Jesus, but you can't determine which Scripture Jesus will bring to you."

Jesus called out the **Pharisees** for this same exact type of controversial behavior. **Matthew** 23:23

So, that's the kind of controversy Paul is forbidding.

Now, for the other stuff. We talked about **genealogies** a few weeks ago [explain].

Dissensions — someone comes to church, tries to get a following, gets angry and leaves.

Quarrels about the law: two ways—**(1)** unbelievers who don't understand context
(2) the Hebrew roots movement.

v. 10-11 – "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."

Churches, in trying to be polite, have put up with divisive people longer than they should.

Here, Paul recommends taking two stabs at getting someone back on track, and then separating.

Contrary to popular belief, a church isn't being divisive if it stands for the truth...

Rather, it's those, who contradict it, that stir up trouble.

A man named **Arius** in the 300s started spreading the idea that Jesus was *created* by God—making Him less important.

A few years later, **Pelagius**, began teaching that human beings do not have a sinful nature.

Before both of them, a guy named **Marcion** taught that the God in the New Testament was a different and better one than in the Old.

These are ideas that a Christian church should *never* tolerate—the Bible has too much to say about these subjects.

But, there are less clear areas where

"...Christians may differ from each other, without being divided." — John Calvin | **Romans** 14:1-3

One good reason for allowing some disagreement is that, once you become a Christian, you don't know *every single* Christian belief in an instant...

It takes a lifetime, really. But here's the deal: once taught about something from the Bible, a Christian will either **accept** it or **ask** to learn more.

Whereas, a *"divisive person"* (Gk: **hairetikos**, Eng: **heretic**) will reject it—even *after* being taught.

If this is the case, something called church discipline comes into effect. 1 **Corinthians** 5:1-5

v. 12-14 – "When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful."

Even though this letter is inspired by the Holy Spirit, it remains *very* personal.

Sure, the information in this portion would have been more useful to Titus than it is to us, but that being said, *all* Scripture is profitable (2 Tim. 3:16), and these details help us piece together early church history.

Apparently, Paul sent Titus to Crete on a temporary basis, and here we discover his plan to relieve Titus from this mission and to go elsewhere.

Paul was headed to **Nicopolis**, a city in southern Greece, right on the beach of the Adriatic Sea—a *perfect* place to spend the winter.

And Titus is supposed to meet him there. Perhaps this was going to be like a mini pastors conference, where ministers get a break from training their churches to receive training themselves.

Now, at this point, as he wrote Titus, Paul had not decided who to send to Crete as a replacement.

But, we can assume that it was this fellow, named Artemas. 2 **Timothy** 4:10–12

This was written at the end of Paul's life and it says that Titus is in Dalmatia (modern day Croatia) and Tychicus is being sent to Ephesus (modern day Turkey) to replace Timothy.

But maybe you're curious about who these guys are...

I'll be honest, before recently, I had no idea who Zenas and Artemas were... and I had only heard of Tychicus once or twice.

There is nothing else in the Bible about Artemas or Zenas.

And all we know about Tychicus is found in *Acts 20:4*, where he is listed as one of Paul's disciples and shipmates, and **Colossians** 4:7.

Apollos is probably the same guy mentioned in **Acts** 18:24–19:1.

Together, Tychicus and Apollos delivered this letter to Paul.

But for all of these names we have here...there isn't really a ton of information or detail...

There is a *great* lesson for *all of us* in this: We don't serve God in order to become **famous**.

Think about Paul: He worked some long and *extremely* difficult days in his life. Then one day, Emperor Nero had Paul decapitated and a few years later, no one would remember most of his work...Yet, there he was, coordinating a network of churches and leaders.

In a few years neither we nor our work will be remembered. But, God will remember. **Hebrews** 6:10

His memory is the *only* one that *truly* counts.

And one day, *maybe* He will fill us in on who Artemas and Zenas are, or even introduce us, and we will hear the rest of their stories.

**v. 15 – “All who are with me send greetings to you.
Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.”**

Paul ends this short letter with warmth and fellowship, but it is addressed to the true Christians only.

If people in Crete were being stubborn and had negative feelings about Paul, they didn't receive any sort of blessing from him.

Jesus told His disciples this, and Paul is echoing this in a subtle way. **Luke** 10:16

If you reject what Jesus' messengers taught, you reject Jesus Himself—you reject God.

And yet, there are plenty of people/"churches" today, who reject God's message that He delivered through people, like Paul.

May that never be any of us.