

Title: Avoiding Bad Investments
Text: Titus 3.9-11
Theme: The seriousness of sinful division
Series: Titus
Prop Stmt: Since the church is called to be a reflection of our Triune God, division is an affront to his nature and name.

A local couple decided to take one of their mothers on a cruise in the Caribbean, so they purchased the tickets and booked their flights...to Houston. The cruise was supposed to go out of and return to Galveston. They arrived in Houston shortly before Hurricane Harvey did. Since the cruise ship they were planning to take, could not dock in Galveston, this couple and their mom were stranded in Houston and were caught in the middle of the hurricane. Who would have thought? A cruise is supposed to be a worry-free, fun-filled, no-problem vacation. Food, entertainment, great weather, fun activities, etc. A cruise has it all, except this one. The rain was incredible. It went on and on and on and here they were stranded in a hotel. One night a group of the guests in the hotel decided to venture out to a restaurant 3 blocks away, after all, life in a hotel gets a little dull. This couple almost went, but their 80-year old mother did not want to, so instead of leaving her, they reluctantly stayed and ate another meal at the hotel. That evening while the others were at this restaurant, water started filling the streets, and then the restaurant. The families who went had to stand on their chairs, and then on the tables while the water kept coming. Then the rats came. They were trying to get on the tables as well, but the water kept coming. Parents put their kids on their shoulders because now the water was neck deep for those standing on the tables. And that is how they spent the night; fighting off rats, fighting off sleep, staying above the water and praying. This couple said, had they gone, their mother would have most certainly died.

Of course, they never got on the cruise. When you read about going on a cruise, you imagine all of the places you will visit, the food you will eat, the fun you will have, and the rest you will enjoy. You would never imagine spending a night in a restaurant, standing on a table with your kid on your shoulder with water up to your neck fighting off rats, right? Reality was a long way away from expectation.

Now, instead of going on a cruise, let's say that you are preparing to go on a battleship and your battleship is being sent on a mission to intercept and destroy any nukes or missiles fired by N. Korea, and on board your battleship was a contingent of the Navy Seals who had orders to infiltrate, disrupt and eliminate key members of N. Korea's high command. Before boarding your ship, General Joseph Dunford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff makes a surprise appearance and speaks to the crew about the dangers and the importance of your mission. Cell phones are turned in, life insurance papers are updated, blood types are double-checked and extra chaplains are available. The message is clear, this is no cruise; this is for real.

In an effort to attract people, churches often advertise themselves as being something akin to cruise ships. Websites and social media depict fun, fun, fun. Everyone is getting along, everything is going smoothly, people are smiling, kids are laughing; the events are

amazing and well, life looks wonderful. Who wouldn't want to be part of a church like that? But real church is not a cruise liner; it is a battleship. Our mission is not primarily fun and giddy, it is serious, but because it is serious, it is glorious and ultimately satisfying. But like anything that is truly valuable, it is vulnerable. The book of Titus is the final letter of Paul to his young protégé's Timothy and Titus. Each of these letters have instructions in them on how to address issues that arise and affect the church, because they do and they always will until Christ returns. Our text speaks to this.

Read Text:

Let me review some obvious and foundational truths.

- You are living, breathing, thinking, feeling, and existing because there is a God who is ultimately responsible for you being alive.
- You therefore, exist because God purposed for you to exist and since God has purposed for you to exist, there is a purpose for your life.
- The most important thing that you could ever discover and do has to do with you finding out and carrying out God's purpose for your life.
- The church is called by God to faithfully and accurately teach the Bible because the Bible tells you about your ultimate purpose.
- If you do not discover and live out your purpose, you are wasting your life and if the church does not faithfully and accurately teach you the Bible then we are contributing toward you wasting your life. It does not matter how many programs or functions we do, how nice the building is nor how efficient we appear to be. If we get distracted from our ultimate purpose we are failing at our primary responsibility.
- Due to the fact that the church is called to engage in matters of eternal importance, the church is always going to be tempted to get off point. Matters of eternal importance are weighty to think about and many people would rather be entertained than to deal with weighty matters. In addition to that, Satan is real and he is actively engaged in seeking to keep you from following God. He hates God and he hates you. Since he can't destroy God, he is literally hell bent on doing everything he can to destroy you. Therefore, if he can deceive people into doing things that they think are important or make them feel important but will get a church off point; he will do it with a vengeance.
- Therefore, we have to be on guard because there are always things coming up that can get us off our message and distract us from our primary ministry.

That is the backdrop to the book of Titus and that is the backdrop to us. Titus is dealing with the difficult fact that there were people who were attempting to use the church as a platform to advance their own egos, fill their own insecurities, build their own little kingdoms, and advancing their own little causes instead of embracing and advancing the ultimate cause. And Titus has to deal with it and so does every faithful church. This is a battleship. We have a mission. And it is critical that we are all pulling in the same direction. The warnings of our text (9-11) are set up by verses 1-8.

I. Why unity is so important. (1-8)

It is important because:

A. **It is a reflection of God.**

In verse 8 we read how the leadership of the church is to insist on these things. What are “these things” that we are to insist on? We are to encourage one another to do good things that help serve one another. When you serve someone else you prefer that person over yourself. You are setting that person’s needs ahead of yours. Unity is forged when people prefer others over themselves. That is true in a family. That is true on a football team. That is true in a department at work. That is true in a platoon of the army. That is true in a church. It is true, because it is true of God.

The big idea of verses 1-8 is the fact that we should be ready to serve one another because God served us. I did not have the time go into it last week, but in this wonderful passage about the gospel, we see how all three members of the Godhead (Father, Son and Spirit) are involved in our salvation.

God is called our Savior in v.4. Is he referring to the Father or the Son? I should point out that in the books of 1 and 2nd Timothy and Titus (the Pastoral Epistles) that Paul repeatedly refers to God the Father and God the Son as Saviors because they save their people. (1 Timothy 1.1; 2.3; 4.10; Titus 1.3-4; 2.10; 2.13; 3.4 and 3.6) The people that the Father saves are the same people that the Son saves. The point is that the Father, the Son and the Spirit all work together in order to save you. Your salvation is the result of the glorious unity of God all working in harmony in order for your salvation to be accomplished and applied. That is seen in the work of the Spirit in regeneration and renewal (v.5) and in the work of the Son (v.6) whose life and death is the means by which the grace of God is poured out on us resulting in us being justified (declared righteous).

The Father planned your salvation and chose you from eternity past. In planning your salvation he planned for his Son to come to this earth in the form of a baby and grow to be a man so that he could die in your place and pay for your sins. The Son loves the Father so much that he surrendered himself to do the will of the Father even though it was costly. The Father was so pleased at the perfect surrender of his Son that he delighted in his Son’s obedience and reveled in it. The Father loves the Son and loves to exalt the glories of his Son so much that his plan for our salvation was so that we could be in a kingdom where the Son was the King! The Son loves the Father so much and wants the glorious love and grace of the Father to be set on display before the world that he willingly came to this earth and died in our place. In fact the Son said that God so LOVED the world that he (the Father) sent his Son, his only Son, and gave his Son. The Father gave his Son and the Son was willing to be given up for us so that whoever believes in him would have eternal life. Well, who is going to believe in him? The Father did not leave that to chance, but sent the Spirit to come and open our eyes and cause us to behold Jesus and love him. And when we do this we are sealed by the Spirit into the family of God and kept as his forever and ever.

Do you see it now? The very heart of the gospel is God's love for God. God's love for you is an expression of God's love for God and God's love for God is seen in how God prefers others. The Father considered your salvation so valuable that he was willing to send his Son in order to secure your salvation even though he infinitely loves his Son. The Son was willing to come because in loving the Father, he loves what the Father loves and since the Father loves you, Christ loves you. And the Spirit loves to see the love of the Father and the Son set on display so everything he does in bringing you and others to faith in Christ is so the Father and the Son will be exalted and so that their glories will be enjoyed. Do you see my point? The unity of God is the very source of the plan to rescue us from sin. The unity of God is essential to who God is. And since unity is essential to who God is, unity is essential to the people that God has called to follow him. Following our tri-une God is going to be reflected in our pursuit of unity.

B. It is a result of the gospel.

Unity is important not only because it is a reflection of God, it is a result of the gospel. When you come to faith in Christ, you are brought into union with Christ. You are made one with Christ. You get credit for his life, you get credit for his death, you get his resurrection; you even inherit his kingdom. We are joint heirs with Christ because we are one with him. This is what the gospel does. It places every single one of his followers into a relationship that perfectly unites us together with Christ, forever. Therefore, while we do not yet perfectly experience this as we will, we are called to live out in practice what is real in our position. We are, really IN Christ. And we are not in Christ by ourselves. We are in Christ together. Unity among the people of God is a reflection of and a result of the gospel. People do not get along because someone refuses to actually prefer others. The gospel can only be embraced by people who admit their sin and instead of preferring themselves, they surrender (prefer) to God. Jesus humbled himself and died for you (Philippians 2.5-8). Therefore, if you are follower of Christ, humble yourself and prefer others (Philippians 2.1-4).

C. It is attractive and unusual.

Every family has issues, right? So, when you are hanging around someone's family, or let's say that you are in the early stages of dating someone and you are just getting to know them and their family, you pretty much figure that at some point the weird stuff is going to come out. Someone is going to open a drawer or a closet and out will come Uncle Weird or Cousin Crazy. But, sometimes you will find a family where everyone actually loves one another and they really like to be together and where there is no tension, and no looks of panic when anyone opens a drawer or a closet because there is nothing to hide. If you have ever experienced that, it is so attractive. It is so compelling. It is so comforting, but it is so unusual. But unity like this a foretaste of what eternal life with Christ is all about. Therefore, Satan is going to do everything he can to keep us from enjoying unity like that.

However, whenever division takes place unnecessarily it hurts and the hurt can last a long time.

II. We have to guard the unity of the body. (9-11)

Guarding the unity of the body means to:

A. **Avoid stupid stuff that doesn't matter.**

Avoid is a strong word. To avoid something means to stay away from it. You have to go in another direction. You have to separate yourself from that. The word has the idea of shunning. Have nothing to do with this stuff. This means that we have to make categories and we have to identify the things that we will teach and the things that we won't teach. We will not teach nor allow others to teach things that are not true or that do not matter. The elders are charged with protecting what is taught in the church. This is not because we are insecure control freaks; it is because we have a charge from God to protect the church.

Now, when people want to teach stupid stuff, they do not usually know that it is stupid stuff. In some cases, they think that they have just discovered a secret or they heard something that sounds fascinating. Our job is to filter that and as you can imagine that is not always appreciated. But, this is not a cruise line where you can just go up and try your hand at karaoke or stand-up comedy. This is a battleship. Lives are at stake. We cannot allow stupid stuff to be taught.

I use the word "stupid" because that is what the word that is translated foolish means. Last week, Timothy Record who lives in Massachusetts, apparently stabbed his brother to death because they were arguing over whose electronic devices were slowing down the Wi-Fi in their home. That is grievously stupid. It is tragic. Some people want to argue over stupid stuff. Our task is to identify those things and stay away from them.

A favorite topic is genealogies. It still goes on to this day. People think that they have found coded messages in the genealogies that sound fascinating, and when they teach this sort of stuff, people are impressed. Let me give you an example. One guy recently published a study on the meaning of the names in the genealogy of Genesis 5.

Adam	Man
Seth	Appointed
Enosh	Mortal
Kenan	Sorrow
Mahalalel	The Blessed God
Jared	Shall come down
Enoch	Teaching
Methuselah	His death shall bring
Lamech	The Despairing
Noah	Rest, or comfort

Put them all together and you get: Man (is) appointed mortal sorrow; (but) the Blessed God shall come down teaching (that) His death shall bring (the) despairing rest.

And people read that and go – wow! That is crazy! I never saw that before. That is amazing! This guy must know all sorts of secrets and this kind of stuff encourages people to search for more hidden secrets. The problem is, this stuff is not only not completely factual, but it is not why the Bible was written. God did not hide stuff from us. He made it clear. We don't have to look for hidden things when we have plain stuff. And the plain stuff warns us about arguing over genealogies and the like.

Dissensions and quarrels about the law refer to the fact that people love to argue over OT laws and make laws now that are ill-fated attempts at proving or attaining spirituality. Again, we always have people coming up with another Bible diet based on the OT law which is supposedly how God really intends for us to eat and which will cure gout, cancer, acne, insomnia, a-fib, hair loss and flabby arms. That stuff is not the point and it gets people off message.

However, some people persist on stirring things up and when they do, you have to

B. Avoid people who just want to stir things up.

This is not a matter of personality – it is a matter of sin. The Bible gives us a protocol to follow. Paul says to warn them once and then twice and then, have nothing more to do with them. That is consistent with what Jesus said in Matthew 18. Go to the person in private and warn them. If that does not work, then take two or three witnesses along and warn them again. If they keep on, then you bring the matter before the church so that the church is warned and so that they cannot wield influence and get the church off message.

Does that sound like fun? Of course not and it isn't.

Through the years, I have seen many people who have started attending here, who had an agenda that was not compatible with our message or mission. In some cases, it was obvious right away (KJV issue). In other cases it was under the guise of wanting to be the best friend to the pastor (so they could get some juicy details and feel like they were on the inside). Some wanted so desperately to be a teacher because they thought that being a teacher in the church was a sure road to respectability and affirmation. Others just wanted attention. They wanted to be thought of as being an intellect, or being spiritually deep, or extremely devoted. And then you always have people who have the proverbial chip on their shoulder. They act as if everyone who is in leadership is a complete buffoon and that no one, other than them, will ever do anything right. No matter what is being discussed, they are critical, nit picky, harsh and caustic. The language in verse 10 is tough love because of the reality that is exposed in v.11. If you have to warn someone twice about being divisive and they refuse to take the warning to heart, something is way out of line in their heart. And while taking action like that (avoid – again strong word) sounds difficult, and it is difficult it is good. We have to protect the congregation from people

who just want to stir things up. People who just want to stir things up have a warped view of the church (it exists to serve them) and a warped view of themselves (they are to be the object of respect and admiration) and are in fact self-condemned. The church does not condemn them by avoiding them, they have condemned themselves and the church is just pointing out the obvious.

What happens when you are dealing with people like that? You forget what is your message and purpose. It is unprofitable. The church is called to serve others (v.8 – this is profitable). Those who want to serve themselves exhaust the time and energy from what matters because they demand so much attention.

Conclusion:

We are a battleship. We are in a war. We have an enemy and our enemy wants to stir up things within and will try to use ourselves. We have to guard our own hearts and then help one another and warn one another if need be. If someone warns you about something, do not assume they are wrong. Listen carefully, humbly and prayerfully. They may be an instrument in the hand of God to help you.