**Profit vs. Non-Profit**

**Titus 3:8-11 (ESV)**

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Grab your copy of God’s Word. You can open up to the book of Titus chapter 3. We’re going through that letter to Titus, a pastor several thousand years ago who was helping people follow Jesus. It’s the same thing we’re doing here. We’re following Jesus together. He is the good Shepherd, the great Shepherd. We’re here to sing His praises, pray in His name, and by the power of His Spirit to come together to listen to His Word, and then go and live it out to the glory of God the Father. Titus chapter 3. We’re focusing on verses 8-11 today, but we will start in verse 3 and then we’ll work our way through.

***3*** *For 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.* ***4*** *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,* ***5*** *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,* ***6*** *whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,* ***7*** *so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.* ***8*** *The saying 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.* ***9*** *But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.* ***10*** *As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him,* ***11*** *knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.*

The school administration thought it would be a good idea to teach elementary students about money and the stock market, so they offered a one-time elective class on investment. Somehow, in the fourth grade, a few of my friends and I got in. We had almost no idea what stocks were, but learning about money had its own appeal. When the class began, they used a computer simulation to give each student a set amount of wealth to invest in stocks. The money was fake, but the market was real and it made the atmosphere electric. I had no clue what I was doing, but I just put all my money in the first company I recognized. The next weekend, my portfolio was off the charts. (Laughter!) I was near the top of my class in returns. So it hadn’t taken long for the power of a good investment to suddenly become apparent.

Since I was perhaps the youngest in the class, plenty of these other students took interest in my success and began offering me advice on what to do with all my newfound wealth. Stock tips came in from every direction. At that point, I had the magic touch, so I just acted on tips without additional research or discernment. I made just a few clicks here and there and within weeks, my earnings had vanished entirely. (Laughter!) That’s when the danger of a bad investment became equally as clear. It was a downturn that proved to be something from which I couldn’t quite recover. Plenty of other students had similar experiences through the semester. Any advice the teacher offered seemed to be undermined the next week. By the end of the class, it seemed like most people’s main takeaway was just that the market was random and either the experts or our teacher or both had no idea what they were talking about. (Laughter!) I think it was the one and only time they offered that class. (Laughter!)

There was a clear lesson in it for me. While investments can sometimes go very good, they can also go very, very bad. Investing is a power that can go in either direction. Some investments are exceedingly profitable. Others can be very detrimental. We all want our valued resources to be put to good use, but we also know how quickly they can go to waste. When we move from a simulation to real life, the actual stakes get very high and there is a tremendous need for discernment between the difference. There is a need for discernment between investments that are worthwhile and profitable and those that are worthless. There is a need for clarity between the things that bring profit and those that don’t.

These days, it’s easy for people to focus on the economy. Where is the market going? What’s happening oversees or taxes? How should I invest? Good counsel and direction are hard to come by, and even then it’s tentative. But this idea of stewardship relates to more than just money. There is one resource we possess that is far more valuable, far more reasonably within our control, and much more clear about where it is wisely invested. That’s our time. It’s how much energy we spend investing with whom, when, and how. There is who you invest in through action and conversation.

Sometimes we forget about our time as something that we are investing, even though similar factors are in play. We’re spending. We get a set amount every day. Some conversations and pursuits are worthwhile and profitable. Others are detrimental. The stakes are high. Money can be earned back or exchanged or shared, but time isn’t like that. It’s spent and gone and you never know how many days you get. Conversations, words once spoken, just like toothpaste out of the tube, they cannot be taken back. So our actions and our conversations, how we invest our energy and our time into the thing that lasts, which is relationship with God, others’ relationship with God and with one another, these are the things that last because they go not only in this life, but into the next. They are long-term investments. They are things that go into eternity.

With that in view, how are your investments? Who and how are you investing? Sometimes we approach life like I did that class. It’s a bit random, self-determined, just based on sporadic advice of those around us. We’re kind of uncertain about whether something is profitable or not. But God has not left us without guidance. He wants us to invest well. Through the Scriptures, even though we’re in this world of uncertainty, we actually have direction about what is eternally secure and what is supernaturally ensured. We have advice on how to discern and escape occupying ourselves with things that would otherwise waste our time. How do we know what we can or should invest in and what we shouldn’t?

Titus was on this island with all sorts of chaos. There was moral depravity. There was theological uncertainty. There was social disunity. There were all kinds of things to occupy his attention. This chaos was rife throughout the community. It was not supposed to be so in Jesus’ church. He was calling His followers out of this senseless chaos and into a realm of sensible order, a realm of beauty permeated by the good news of this gospel message about Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Savior to sinners who would trust in Him. This is what Paul encouraged Titus to remember himself, and to remind his people of. It’s the way Jesus’ followers are to live. The church members on Crete, the elders and leaders like Titus and like Paul were meant to live by investing in this ministry of the gospel, investing in this message and the fruit it produced. That fruit is the hope of Jesus and the transformation He brings. Paul wanted to live that way. He wanted Titus to live that way. He wanted Titus to call his followers to live that way, investing in the message, the sowing of this gospel truth and the fruit that it would bear, and living that out.

Jesus never wasted His time. He didn’t waste a moment and He didn’t waste a word. He lived perfectly in the wisdom and under the direction of God’s Spirit. He had perfect productivity and He calls His followers after Him. He gives us guidance and direction by His Word and then by the Spirit to occupy ourselves with things that would be profitable, things that would bring Him glory and that would be worthwhile. He calls us to live in a way that is discerning about where we invest ourselves. Gospel investments are totally worth it, but they also won’t go without opposition. That’s why following Jesus will involve advancing what is profitable and then avoiding what is not. We will engage in what is profitable and then disengage from what is not.

God has given us guidance and we need to be aware of both as we make decisions throughout our day. He gives some direction through Paul’s advice to Titus here about how we can invest our time and energy as he was. This is advice to help us discern where to invest and where not to. He begins with the good, where we should invest. This is what is profitable. It’s where we should invest and what we should work to advance. What is beneficial or useful or good? Where should we invest? Guaranteed high return investments are not common in this world. They’re not common, but we’re given one here in verse 8. It’s the best investment advice you’ll ever receive.

**I. Profitable Gospel Doctrines To Advance (8)**

***8*** *The saying 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.*

Guaranteed high return investment is not common, but if you somehow happen to have a trustworthy source for determining what was profitable, it would be foolish not to invest. Few people have that kind of privileged information. But in life there was one woman who did. Her name was Sylvia Bloom. She was your typical legal secretary. She lived in this rent controlled apartment. Her husband was a firefighter and teacher. She lived a simple life. She often took the subway or a public bus. So it was kind of a shock when she retired in 1996 and after she passed away, a small local group receives a call and she had left them over 6 million dollars. It was the single largest gift the group had received in 125 years. They didn’t know what to do with it. It seemed that no one knew that over the course of her career, she had actually acquired over 9 million dollars. How did it happen? Well, she had a niece who said, “She was a secretary in an age when they ran their boss’ lives, including their personal investments. So when the boss would buy a stock, she would make the purchase for him, and then she would buy the same stock for herself, just in a smaller amount.” She discovered an investment that was profitable and so she acted upon it.

Now, it’s rare to have such clear confidence on whether an investment is truly

profitable. But here we have information on one that is worthwhile and more trustworthy than the tips that even Sylvia was privy to. We have a guarantee from God that this is something worthwhile. Gospel investments are totally worth it because they’re eternal. You see it there in verse 8. These are the kinds of investments that we are to champion or advance.

You think of like the soldier that is grabbing that flag and running ahead so that everyone would follow. Yes, this is worthwhile. It’s a sacrifice that is worth every effort to call others to do the same. Let’s invest for the Gospel, this message about Jesus. What kinds of teachings or doctrines about the Gospel does Paul highlight here? These are lessons that we can keep in mind that we should be advancing and investing in. I’ll try to draw out a few here in verse 8.

**1. The gospel grace we can trust.**

***8*** *The saying is trustworthy,*

The question begins with what is the saying? What is he talking about? There are a lot of discussions in commentaries about what he means by the saying. That’s because it’s not the only place Paul uses this phrase: this is a trustworthy saying. He references it several times in his letters to Timothy. So the discussion people have circles around a couple questions. The first is Paul referring to some saying or poem or hymn that is separate from this, that he is drawing from? Then the second question is, if there is a saying that he is referencing in these verses, then where does it begin and end. What is the saying?

To be sure, Christians have always had certain sayings that become common. We’ve had certain poems and hymns. It even seems like there are some elsewhere in the New Testament. But I don’t think it’s helpful to get caught up in that kind of an idea. I think Paul has in mind what he has just been talking about. The saying that he is talking about particularly as trustworthy here could be all of chapter 3. In a sense, it always encapsulates the message. But perhaps, and many commentators think he is talking about verses 4-7 of this sort of phrase and complete thought about the gospel message of grace, this message that we could trust. You see it there in verses 4-7. It’s this message that

***4*** *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,* ***5*** *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,* ***6*** *whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,* ***7*** *so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

This gospel, this good news message is that we are rescued. We are saved from the wrath of God because of our sin, because Jesus died in our place and He rose again victorious as Savior. That is trustworthy! That gospel grace is worth trusting in. Paul encourages Titus to trust in that grace and to call the people to trust in that grace. There is not only the gospel grace that we can trust, but there is also

**2. The gospel godliness we can teach.**

The saying is trustworthy. Then he says

 *and I want you to insist on these things,*

The gospel godliness we can teach is an insistence to maintain. He notes how he is to teach and then what he is to teach. You see how he is to teach. Paul says

*I want you to insist*

It’s like when your Dad or a coach or an employer sort of on his authority is speaking directly to you. “I’m stepping out here, but I want you to hold this line. I want you to insist.” He’s handing you the keys or giving you a specific instruction on behalf of his own authority. Titus is not to make suggestions. He is supposed to speak and hold the line that has been given to him. I want you to insist, to teach this godliness.

It’s the same kind of word that is referred to by the false teachers in 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 7 where there are people making confident assertions. They are just out there making confident assertions and Paul says, “No, you stress and you affirm strongly. You insist on this teaching.” It relates back to Titus 2:15. Remember what he said.

**Titus 2:15** Declare these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

Paul doesn’t want him to be tentative or timid. This is what elders and teachers need to do. Remember back to Titus 1:9. An elder

**Titus 1:9** He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

This is how he is to teach. What he is to teach are

*these things,*

It’s the same question. What is in Paul’s mind here about these things? What is he to insist upon and to emphasize? Certainly I think he has the gospel truths in context. We just mentioned that in verses 4-7. But it would seem that Paul has in mind the beginning of that chapter, even verses 1-3. He has in mind this complete unit. Just like he concluded chapter 2 with this call to declare with authority and to be bold, he now again calls this insistence in teaching to be bold about not just the doctrine, but also the practice and how it relates in every day life. You look back at Titus 3:1-2 and you see this sort of godliness lived out in a world that is opposing you. He says

**Titus 3:1–2** 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, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

In a world of chaos, it’s going to be very difficult to do these things. He’s going to talk about good works and he is to insist on this gospel godliness that flows through trust in gospel grace. The result is supposed to lead people into

**3. The gospel generosity we can show.**

He tells Titus to teach and insist on these things, on this godly response to grace,

*so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works.*

Here is the gospel generosity that we are to show. You can see here who it is that he has in mind. He’s thinking of Jesus’ followers. But the verb, “those who have believed in God” seems to convey that he might have recent or new converts in mind. He is talking about new believers that are coming out of this world of chaos. Paul knows that Titus needs to instruct and insist to them that they’re going to have to live differently in this world and that trusting in the gospel grace is going to have to overflow in a gospel godliness that is going to overflow into a gospel generosity. You see, these are the people, these new converts, people who have trusted in God. What it’s going to take to show this generosity is that they’re going to have to

*be careful to devote themselves to good works*

He says these people who trust in God need to be careful to devote themselves. You have to insist that they do this. That’s going to require some clear intention. They’re going to have to have attention to dedication. One version says that they are to make it their business to do good, to set their mind on it, to be intent on it, to be devoted to it as their practice, their concern. How it shows is through good works. This is a basic phrase describing living righteously in general. This idea is that they are to be busy in their lives and out in the community to take the lead and engage in doing good, living generously for the glory of God and the good of others.

Now the world is so overrun by false messages that we kind of have a reaction. The world is going to bring this human appeal for us to trust in a message that we often refer to as works-based. It’s a works-based message that what we do in life to have hope for life after death is to try to work our way to earn God’s approval to heaven. Lots of religions will give you this call. “Do good works. Do good things and then you will receive God’s love and you will receive His approval.” The gospel is a different message.

The gospel is the power of God to salvation to those who believe. It’s a message of grace. It says it’s not by your good works that you receive salvation. You don’t earn salvation as a prize. It’s given as a gift and received by faith. You see, our works don’t contribute towards our salvation. It’s this gift of grace. Yet, just because the Gospel message is a message of grace, it doesn’t mean that God doesn’t care about works. He does. We’re not saved by good works. We’re saved unto good works. He cares that it would be a fruit that would result from His rescue of us.

**Ephesians 2:8–9** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

But that doesn’t mean that works are in the rearview mirror. No, He did that so that no one may boast.

**Ephesians 2:10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

He wants us not to just say good works are a bad thing. No, we recognize we’ve been saved by grace. It’s a gift given, but now that we’ve received that gospel message, it’s supposed to produce and bear fruit in our lives. God cares that we would live out generously His love for His glory and the good of those around us. This is the response to God’s generosity. It’s a generous love for others. In 2 Corinthians 9, Paul talks about this idea of generosity and giving. He talks about how it produces thanksgiving in others when you live out generously because they see that this is God’s gift and that you’re responding merely to the generosity of God. Paul is teaching Titus to tell his followers to trust Gospel grace, teach Gospel godliness, and then show Gospel generosity. It’s the same kind of idea I think we see in Hebrews chapter 10. It’s a familiar verse.

**Hebrews 10:23** Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

This is that message that we trust.

**Hebrews 10:24** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

Even as we know it’s by grace that we’ve been saved, it’s not the result of works now because we have been rescued and saved. Let’s try to stir each other up and prompt each other towards living out loving and generous lives in this world around us. Let’s grab that flag of gospel love and generosity and advance His love to the world around us. That leads us to

**4. The gospel glory we can share.**

There is that sense like we sang, of the light that shines. Paul says

*These things are excellent and profitable for people.*

Again, Paul uses the phrase “these things.” We have to ask, what does he have in mind? The elements that he shares, these lessons or teachings, is that what he has in mind? Or is it the good works themselves? What is the thing that is trustworthy and profitable? In the end, I think both are valuable. It’s affirmed in Scripture. But I think the elements he is referring to here as trustworthy and profitable are the kinds of conversations and teachings that Titus is to emphasize in his ministry, in contrast to the kinds of conversations and teachings that others are trying to draw people into. The good works are the fruit or the results from those kinds of conversations. Paul is saying these are the kinds of things to talk about, to invest in, to teach, and then the kind of fruit that should be produced. This is where profit takes place. It is good investments. These are the kinds of things to talk about and emphasize. These are important qualities that result in God-glorifying fruit. You can see the merit they possess and the benefit they offer. He says

*These things are excellent and profitable*

The extent of their impact is that they are profitable

*for people.*

Remember, we are saying this is about investing in relationships. These are the kinds of conversations and actions that provide benefit to the community. That word “people” there has some idea and seems to hint that we’re talking not just about the Christian community within the church, but the community at large. People are going to receive benefit. They’re going to experience a little bit of that Gospel glory, the light of God shining out into the world. This is how the church is to adorn the doctrine of God, with sound living such that people can see it. It’s to put it on display. It’s going to bring a bit of that glory and put it on display. Living these truths out is a way to advance the Gospel message in this world and have a compelling impact. That kind of investment is totally worth it. It’s not going to be a waste. It’s worthwhile.

Jesus had that lasting impact. He is the most influential person that has ever walked the earth, by any estimation. His lasting impact, His investment, He never wasted a moment. He never wasted a word. He never wasted others’ time. He never wasted God’s time. He was perfectly under the power and the influence of the Holy Spirit. He had maximum impact, maximum influence. He couldn’t have invested His time better. He couldn’t have spoken a word better.

When I was in college, I remember you would gather together and share some prayer requests. What was everybody’s prayer request? Almost always, people would say, “I need some help with time management.” Has anybody ever prayed for help with time management? Jesus never wasted a moment. He never thought, “Oh, I could have said that better. I could have done that better.” He perfectly invested His time. Yet, people didn’t think so in the moment. They thought, “What are you doing?” In fact, Jesus could heal. If you have somebody who can heal, you would think, “I know how his time should be invested. In this world, I have a plan for you, Jesus.” So here He is. There is a moment where people are there. They’re sick and they’re looking for Him. They’re like, where did Jesus go? He should be here. They go and they find Him off on His own, praying. They said, “What are you doing? People are looking for you. We need to go back.” He says, “No. We need to keep moving.” “What? You can heal.” But He said, “We need to keep moving. I need to go and proclaim the Gospel, for that is why I came.” He had a very clear mission. He wasn’t going to waste a moment. The love and the care of healing and the times where He would step in and wash His disciples’ feet, it was all part of that same Gospel ministry that was emphasizing their need to trust Him as Savior. He was calling His followers into that kind of love.

No one had a more lasting impact than Him and He called His followers to follow in His footsteps and build upon that foundation. You think of Paul’s lasting impact and the other disciples’ impact. These are men who did not have much money, but they had incredible impact, eternal impact on people in their day. It continues to influence countless people in radical life-transforming ways. That’s the kind of impact that we get to be a part of as a church family. Gospel ministry that brings salvation is totally worth it. Paul talks about this in 2 Corinthians 4.

**2 Corinthians 4:1** Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.

There is all this stuff going on in the world. He says we don’t lose heart. In fact, when it comes to this ministry, he says

**2 Corinthians 4:2** But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways.

There are people who are going to come and do ministry and do church and do religion, and it’s going to be disgraceful and underhanded. We’re not going to do that. The kinds of action and conversation we’re to be about is

**2 Corinthians 4:2** …We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word,

We’re not going to try to twist. We’re not going to try to use it to our own benefit. We refuse to do that. He says

**2 Corinthians 4:2** …but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.

We’re going to preach this gospel message and we’re going to live right in front of you and appeal to you and we’re going to let this light shine. But he recognizes there are going to be some people who don’t see it. He says

**2 Corinthians 4:3** And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

He acknowledges there are spiritual forces in the world. He says

**2 Corinthians 4:4** In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

He understands that there are spiritual forces at work. He says

**2 Corinthians 4:5** For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.

We’re here to serve, but He is the one who is shining this light. We’re pointing to Him and He is in charge of this light shining brightly. He says

**2 Corinthians 4:6** For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Paul lived for a time in opposition to Jesus. He was going and trying to put people who were followers of Jesus in prison. He was against Jesus and yet, God opened his eyes and allowed him to see the beauty of the glory of Christ in this good news message of Jesus and His death in our place and His rescue of us and commission of us in the world. He says all of this beautiful salvation,

**2 Corinthians 4:7** But we have this treasure in jars of clay,

We’re weak and you’re looking at us just human. Why would God put something so precious, such a treasure, in a jar of clay? He says it is

**2 Corinthians 4:7** …to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

Here for Paul, for those in ministry, for the church family, we’re coming and we’re bringing this gospel message to a world that doesn’t see it and is in chaos and is difficult to live out. Paul says to insist on these things so that the people would live this way because this is what is true. You have to believe by faith. Don’t lose heart. He says

**2 Corinthians 4:16** So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

Our physical bodies and all the things of this kingdom, of this realm, is decaying and breaking down. He says don’t lose heart. Trust by faith. This is an investment that lasts forever. These are worthwhile.

**2 Corinthians 4:17-18** For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

One pastor talks about imagining living during the civil war. Imagine being in the south. You have just received this giant inheritance of money, but the north and south are fighting. All of a sudden, you get a confirmation that the north is going to win. What you don’t do is invest now in southern currency or southern property and some things that aren’t going to last. There is going to be a big shift, a big change. You need to think about what is going to last. What is a worthwhile investment?

Here we are. We’ve been told this kingdom is fading away. There is a kingdom that is to come. Invest in that. As you see things starting to fall away, don’t fear. Don’t lose heart. Invest in the things that will last forever. Trust this message of gospel grace. There is lots of temptation to doubt it. There is lots of temptation to wonder if this is really true. Paul says this is trustworthy and true. Text it to each other. Send an email to each other. Tell each other. Memorize it. Put it up on a wall in your home. This is trustworthy. This is something that lasts. Even as the economy and all these things are shaking around and your kids are looking and watching you or friends are watching you or your coworkers are watching you, your neighbors are watching you, they will think, “This person isn’t losing heart as everything shakes. Why?” It’s because you have an investment that is unshaken. Paul is saying to put your trust here. Show the world what that kind of trust looks like. Then teach this kind of godliness. Teach it and insist on it with courage and conviction. This is for ourselves, but then I think very specifically this is to Titus and for those who are teaching.

I will take a moment to talk with you because I think this is helpful. A few messages ago, I spoke on a controversial topic. We were talking through those roles, specifically touching on the role of women and the role of the bondservant. As I’m talking and doing that study, it’s hard because it’s controversial in our world today. I’m trying to understand what’s going on. I’m trying to communicate it. Then even as we’re going through the message, time is sometimes an issue for me and I’m getting short. But in that moment as I was communicating, I could feel a little bit of fear. I could feel a little bit of hesitation. I tried to be faithful to what I taught, but I thought about it when I was at home later that day. I was talking to my wife, Janea, and she said, “You seemed a little shaky. You need to preach.” I was thinking about this. I remember reading verse 15 where it says

**Titus 2:15** …Let no one disregard you.

I was sitting over there. Pastor Ritch is up here preaching and I’m trying to sit under the Word and let the Spirit convict. I can feel this call. Don’t let anyone disregard you. This is hard, but it requires courage. I could feel there was a moment of waver, of fear. I was in a community group, just talking with a couple of our guys from the community group. I was talking and sharing. I asked, “Do you think it’s important for the church family to hear this?” One said he thought he sensed that, too.

Maybe you sense that, and maybe not. But I think it’s important in those moments. I try not to make it about me. This is about Jesus. The point is that when you see fear and if it becomes clear enough, to say that fear is not Jesus. Jesus is gentle, yes, but bold. The fear is something that is wrong and unhelpful. When it becomes clear enough I want to be clear so that, one, you can pray for me. But two, so that you can forgive me, because it’s wrong. So I would ask for forgiveness. I’m not trying to cause everyone to be overly speculative. I’m a sinner up here constantly, but when something is clear enough that there is a question about whether Jesus is like that, I want it to be clear. Jesus was not afraid and He was very clear and His message was clear. He tells Titus to insist on these things.

Why is it important? It’s because we are living in this world of chaos and we need to be bold. If we in here are watching the example that I’m leading and there is a moment of timidity, then how are we going to be bold in the workplace? How are we going to be bold with our family? How are we going to be bold when we’re talking to our neighbors? How are the students going to be bold when they’re feeling this impression? They need to see what Jesus is like. In the moments when I fail, just like at home and I tell my kids that’s not what Jesus is like, I want to insist and be faithful. I would ask you to pray for me. Pray for Pastor Ritch. Pray for others who teach. But then also carry forth this boldness. Jesus would have us to be bold about these Gospel truths and the call to godliness.

We’re called to show gospel generosity out in the community. We’re called to be devoted and dedicated, careful to that. That’s because there is a glory to share. It’s worthwhile. These are the things that are not a waste. They’re beautiful and compelling. There is a freedom in it that people need to see and experience. Praise God that so many are living out the Gospel. Just be encouraged, because I know the world is hard and heavy out there. There are people here living out the Gospel. There are people who have made sacrifices. They have lost finances. They’ve lost jobs. They’ve lost family members and friends because they’ve stood for Christ with boldness. I know some of those testimonies and I encourage you to get to know each other, because they’re there. People are doing it even now. Praise God for faithful people in the front, sharing the Gospel. Praise God for ministries here on site, off site, people advancing the mission of Christ, taking stands. There are moms, dads, children in schools, students. All over the place, God is working. Praise God for the investments that have been made in people here and I’ve experienced it myself. What a blessing that we get to be part of this ministry that is lasting forever.

Yet, sometimes it feels like things are getting in the way. Do you ever feel like that? Do you ever feel like something is sort of hindering fruit from being produced? Something is kind of distracting us. What’s happening? We say Gospel investments are totally worth it, but they don’t go without opposition. So we turn from what is profitable to what is not.

**II. Unprofitable Anti-Gospel Dangers To Avoid (9-11)**

Instead of fruitful investments, there are these harmful detriments. These are the things that are unprofitable. They are things that we need to work to avoid. They are unhelpful. They are wasteful.

I read this piece in Forbes about the kinds of damage an enemy can do with just words. It’s very interesting. During World War II, the predecessor to the CIA produced this secret field manual on how citizen-saboteurs could disrupt operations of enemy organizations. So this is a spy manual that they could give to citizens and other countries and organizations that said here’s how you can cause things to get in the way and mess up the mission from the inside. So here’s what that manual said.

It said things like “Insist on doing everything through channels. Never permit shortcuts to be taken in order to expedite decisions. Make speeches. Talk as frequently as possible and at great length. Illustrate your points by long anecdotes and accounts of personal experiences. When possible, refer all matters to committees for further study and consideration. Attempt to make the committees as large as possible and never less than five. Bring up irrelevant issues as frequently as possible. Haggle over the precise wordings of communications, minutes and resolutions. Refer back to matters decided upon at the last meeting and attempt to reopen the discussion of the advisability of that decision. Advocate caution. Be reasonable. Urge your fellow conferees to be reasonable and avoid haste, which might result in embarrassment or difficulties later on.” And it goes on and on.

It’s just interesting not that those kinds of conversations and things need to be had. I think the reason why it’s interesting is because some of those kinds of conversations are things that need to be had, but they’re used in an insidious way to twist. The intention behind is to draw people away from the mission and really just using words from the inside. When we talk about anti-gospel dangers that we have to avoid and the opposition we face, sometimes we think that we’re smarter than we are. We think of course we’ll see that and we’ll know what to avoid. We’ll know to avoid those kinds of things. We have an enemy that is coming and that is deceptive. He draws us in often with flattery and with deception. He draws us into conversations that would hinder that gospel ministry and investment from going forward. So in contrast to the profitable investments that we’re to make, Paul says in the midst of all this, this is what is profitable, but in verses 9-11, he says here is what you need to avoid. There are two dangers that are to be avoided.

**1. Destructive Discussions (9)**

These kinds of discussions, these kinds of conversations are just talking. It’s just words, but he says to watch out for these because they will draw you away from good investment and they will waste your time. When Paul says to avoid them, it’s a strong word. When you encounter these, the word “avoid” there means to turn, to go the other way. It’s to turn aside and actually change where you’re going. One might translate it even as to shun. These kinds of discussions are destructive and you need to avoid them. So how do we identify those kinds of discussions? What is he talking about? Paul gives a few examples of the forms that these kinds of discussions might take. You can maybe note a few qualities that we can say this is what to avoid.

He’s not saying we can’t have passionate conversations. He’s not saying that we can’t have disagreement or different opinions and even debate. We see Paul himself living that out. But there is a time when it crosses a line. There are certain markers that indicate this is something I should not be a part of. So there are a few examples that he gives. First, these kinds of discussions are unconstructive. You can say they are not edifying. They’re not contributing towards the Gospel advance. They’re not building up. He says

***9*** *But avoid foolish controversies,*

They’re controversial, but they’re not merely controversial. They’re foolish. So it’s something to argue about, but they’re foolish. It’s about something that is unhelpful or trivial. Paul elsewhere calls this empty chatter. It’s just not constructive. Then second, they’re speculative. They are not something of substance. He says

***9*** *But avoid foolish controversies,* *genealogies,*

It’s not to say if you’re in your annual Bible reading plan that you can skip genealogies. No, he’s not talking about that. Genealogies serve a purpose. They help us understand a variety of things. We’ve preached on genealogies. There is great value and profit in it. But in what they were doing in twisting and speculating and then trying to tie authority to the lineage or moving words and letters around, there is all kinds of speculation. These are the kinds of conversations that are not helpful. They’re speculative. One pastor would often say, “The main things are the plain things.” Be careful of these kinds of speculative discussions that take you nowhere. So not only are they unconstructive and speculative, they’re also argumentative. He says these are

*dissensions,*

So the danger is not only what they’re about, but it’s also what they produce or even how they happen. These are dissensions. There are good topics that we can discuss. There are important topics that are good to discuss, but how we go about them, if we’re not careful, can be dissentious and argumentative. He says to be careful of those. Avoid those. Don’t be drawn into them. Then fourth, these kinds of discussions are combative.

*and quarrels about the law,*

These are literally scribal battles. This is used sometimes of physical combat, but in the Christian context, it’s talking about battles without weapons. There is a wrestling and a struggling and it’s just combative. In Titus 3:2, there is that phrase that means to be uncontentious, you could say. Avoid quarreling. It means to not be quarrelsome. Elders are actually very specifically called to be not quarreling. This is a quality that elders need to exhibit, that they’re not drawn into these kinds of quarrels and combat with words. These are the destructive discussions to avoid. You can identify them in those ways and you do so because as opposed to gospel investments, these offer no benefit and they possess no merit. He says

*for they are unprofitable and worthless.*

What he is not saying is that people are worthless. He’s talking about these conversations. People are precious beings made in the image of God. People are beings that will last into eternity, yet they can be captured by the enemy. So, even as we avoid those discussions and recognize that those discussions are destructive and worthless, people have worth. In an expression of love for them, we honor God and avoid these discussions. Paul talks about that in 2 Timothy. He says

**2 Timothy 2:16** But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness,

These destructive discussions actually hurt people. They lead people away from what is valuable.

**2 Timothy 2:17** and their talk will spread like gangrene.

**2 Timothy 2:18** They are upsetting the faith of some.

Just like in Titus, we see that households are being upset. There are people who are having discussions that divide. The discussions draw lines and cause people to say, “I’m going to pick this side or that side.” These are upsetting the faith of some. These are the kinds of conversations to avoid. He says

**2 Timothy 2:23** Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.

They’re giving birth to more and more fighting.

**2 Timothy 2:24** And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,

It doesn’t mean that there aren’t times for conversations, but when there are, he says

**2 Timothy 2:25** correcting his opponents with gentleness.

Why? Because these are people. He says

**2 Timothy 2:25-26** …God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

People are not the enemy. Even though we recognize that there is a discussion that is unhelpful and we can be drawn in, there is an enemy at work. In love for those people, we’re going to avoid that conversation and appeal to them gently to come out of it. This is a word that we need to hear. There are destructive discussions and then

**2. Divisive Persons (10-11)**

This is a danger to avoid. There is a serious condition that we need to carefully identify.

***10*** *As for a person who stirs up division,*

Unlike the call in Hebrews 10 where someone is stirring up people to love and good deeds, this is someone who is stirring up division. They’re drawing lines in the sand and stirring people to be unsettled in their house, in their families, or in the church family. They’re trying to divide the body of Christ. The word here is the root word connected to “heretic,” but it wasn’t so much talking about a doctrinal heresy, per se at the time. It was about being divisive or separating. It was cutting off. It was cutting families off from each other. It was cutting parts of the body of Christ off.

Like we said, Paul was attacking the church family and coming after the church family. God rescued him out of that. I think Paul understands what it’s like to be blind and to be used by the evil one to cause damage. So Paul is able to say to be gentle and yet be firm, because that is what is loving. So if there is someone who is being divisive, if there is someone who is driving divisions and they’re stirring this up. We have an example where Paul says

**1 Corinthians 1:10** I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

There were quarrels because people were liking one teacher over another. They were starting to divide and pick sides. Paul is concerned about that. He says to identify this condition if you see someone stirring division. The steady protocol that we’re to lovingly follow, what we’re to do is first an initial phase of admonition. He gives two faithful warnings. So be compassionate, but diligent.

*after warning him once and then twice,*

There is careful admonition, but diligent admonition. There is a clear warning that happens. It possibly could be in public, but it just needs to be clear that it’s decisive. It has been admonished and this person continues to stir division, then there needs to be a settled stance of exclusion through a firm withdrawal. He says

*have nothing more to do with him,*

So we have compassionate diligence in this admonition, warning once and twice, but if they are resolute in this, then we need a settled stance of exclusion through a firm withdrawal and courageous decisiveness, where we have nothing more to do with him. This is not because we don’t love or the person is beyond love. It’s because we do love. We love people enough to obey God in this and be clear. It’s similar to Matthew chapter 18. There is more discussion that we could have on how that is to be exercised. It’s a difficult practice and yet, it’s one that we need to do faithfully. It’s why we need courage and boldness, because we do have an enemy. In Romans 16 you look at Paul greeting and loving all these people, yet at the end, he says

**Romans 16:17–18** I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

There will be people using flattery and drawing in. “You’re the only person that I can trust. You understand.” There are words that will be flattery and smooth talk that will create divisions and divide the family and the body for whom Christ died and that He loves. The call is to avoid because of love for God and love for the body. For those who are feeling discouraged and the weight of that, Paul says

**Romans 16:20** The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

There is great hope! This is the God of peace and yet, the God of victory over this enemy. So there is a sober conclusion that we need to solemnly respect. The sober conclusion is

***11*** *knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.*

This person is profoundly deluded in how they’re thinking and acting. They are warped. They are profoundly deluded and they are persistently disobedient. They are sinful in what they’re doing. They are personally disqualifying. By refusing to listen to the church family as God would make this issue clear, they are self-condemned. Gospel investments are totally worthwhile, but they won’t go without opposition. The point is that if we want to make lasting gospel investments, then we are going to have to avoid certain distractions.

Authority is hard. It can be abusive. It’s not easy. In fact, that will always be the accusation. It’s the accusation even of God. People say that God is unkind and not good and an abusive authority. This is the kind of accusation that will be leveraged against authority, and it was the kind of accusations that were leveraged against Moses. What did he do? He would fall on his face and appeal to God because doing it right will bring scorn. Yet, there is no choice. This is what we’re called to do. Paul says in 2 Thessalonians,

**2 Thessalonians 3:14** If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed.

That’s a heavy word. But we need to remember right after that he says

**2 Thessalonians 3:15** Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

There is a call to peace and there is an aim. If you want to see it beautifully done, look at the last chapter of 2 Corinthians. There is an aim for restoration. That’s what we pray for. It’s what we’re aiming for. We’re not to tear down, but to build up. We comfort one another and we trust in the peace that is brought by God.

The peace that comes with the unity of the Spirit, that comes from the Holy Spirit that He has given, that He accomplishes, we don’t have to accomplish it. If you’re discouraged by division, you’re discouraged by some of these conversations, you’ve seen this and you recognize this gets in the way of us investing in gospel ministry, then this is something worth praying about. Pray for people to have the clarity to see, the compassion to confront, the courage to be clear, the conviction to turn and repent.

Maybe you’ve been hurt. Maybe you need to just rest in God’s grace and trust. Then even maybe you’ve come from another church and maybe you haven’t worked through that. Part of that process is working through even the membership here in the church family or another church family so that you can have a church family walk you through that and help you through what might be even self-deception or help you through what is trusting in the grace of the Gospel. That’s part of the blessing of a church family.

Maybe you’ve left harshly after some conversations. Maybe God would bring to mind people that you need to ask forgiveness from. Maybe there are discussions you’ve been drawn into that you need to avoid. Maybe you sense people avoiding you and you need to evaluate the kinds of discussions you’re a part of. Be careful that you don’t assume it’s that they don’t care, because it could be that they are seeking to honor God and show care. So you might ask someone that you trust, “Am I being destructive? Am I being divisive?” How do we eagerly preserve this unity?

**Psalm 133:1** Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

One pastor said, “A shepherd’s voice has to be gentle enough to comfort the sheep, but firm enough to warn off the wolves.” Both are out of love.