

“A Matter of the Heart”
Titus 1:15-16
(Preached at Trinity, February 12, 2023)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Paul has been instructing Titus regarding the false teachers circulating among the Cretan churches. Apparently, they were numerous. Paul says in **Verse 10:**
Titus 1:10 NAU - "For there are many rebellious men"
2. He describes them in detail – **Verse 10.**
 - A. They were “rebellious men.” They were in rebellion against the Word of God, and thus they were against God.
 - B. They were “empty talkers and deceivers.” Their words had no value for the church. Instead of edifying the church, they weakened the church. Instead of teaching truth, they were spewing lies.
 - C. They were largely from the Jewish community.
Titus 1:10 NAU - "especially those of the circumcision,"
 1. These were Jews who were outwardly professing faith in Christ, while at the same time demanding obedience to the Law in order to gain God's approval. This was the heart of the Judaizers who taught that in order to be saved you had to follow Christ AND be circumcised and maintain the Mosaic Law. They were denying the very heart of the Gospel of grace. Paul reserved his harshest rebuke to those teaching this heresy. This was the false teaching in Galatia and was part of the Cretan heresy.
Galatians 1:6-8 NAU - "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; ⁷ which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!"
 2. Paul had nothing good to say about them.
Titus 1:12-13 NAU - "One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." ¹³ This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith"
3. In **Verses 15-16** Paul directs his focus upon the nature of this false teaching.
 - A. The Jews of the Old Covenant were strict in the matter of ceremonial purification.
 1. Ceremonial washing was rich in symbolism – of washing away defilement. Israel was to wash themselves before approaching Mount Sinai.
Exodus. 19:10-11 - "The LORD also said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; ¹¹ and let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people."

2. The priests were given strict rules.
Exodus. 30:18-20 NAU - "You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base of bronze, for washing; and you shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it. ¹⁹ "Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet from it; ²⁰ when they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water, so that they will not die; or when they approach the altar to minister, by offering up in smoke a fire *sacrifice* to the LORD."
 3. Sacrifices had to be carefully washed.
Exodus. 29:17 NAU - "Then you shall cut the ram into its pieces, and wash its entrails and its legs, and put *them* with its pieces and its head."
 4. The idea was that outward washing was essential for their purification.
- B. By the time of Christ the Pharisees had elevated the strictness of this ceremonial washing.
1. They condemned the disciples of Christ for their failure to properly wash their hands.
Matthew 15:1-2 NAU - "Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ² "Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."
 2. Upon this Jesus took the opportunity to teach on the matter of true purity.
Matthew 15:10-11 NAU - "After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, "Hear and understand. ¹¹ "*It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.*"
4. Being right before God is a matter of the heart. True purity is a matter of the heart. These false teachers were adding Jewish ceremonial purification to the work of Christ. In doing so they were revealing how defiled their heart truly was.
- I. Paul begins with a statement of truth: "Unto the pure all things *are* pure"
- A. Paul is echoing the words of Christ – true purity demands a pure heart.
Matthew 15:17-20 NAU - "Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? ¹⁸ "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. ¹⁹ "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. ²⁰ "These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."
1. Who are the pure? It is those who have been cleansed from the defilement of sin through the blood of Christ. It is those who have received Christ by faith, those who have been transformed through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. These alone have a pure heart.
 2. The problem of works-based religion is it is seeking to cover inward defilement through an outward covering. Like Adam and Eve's fig leaves.
 - a. This is the first approach most people pursue. They try to clean up their life. To do good works.

- b. It only covers over the defilement like whitewash.
Matthew 23:27-28 NAU - "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ "So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

- B. Only from a pure heart flows genuine purity
1. It's like a clear spring from which flows clean and refreshing water. It is far different from what bubbles up from the sewer.
 2. Paul says for the pure all things are pure. Paul's thoughts are on the ceremonial restrictions of Judaism. For the Christian the ceremonial restrictions neither purify nor defile.
 3. This doesn't mean we don't give any attention to what we put into our body. It means what we put in cannot make us pure. Paul made this distinction in 1 Corinthians. Just because it is permitted doesn't mean it is beneficial. Just because you can doesn't mean you should.

1 Corinthians 10:23 NAU - "All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify."

II. Paul gives a clear statement of human depravity

Titus 1:15-16 NAU - "but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. ¹⁶ They profess to know God, but by *their* deeds they deny *Him*, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed."

- A. Paul describes them as "defiled and unbelieving" "detestable, worthless."
1. The word for defiled means polluted or contaminated. We are contaminated. Can you imagine such filth entering into the throne room of an infinitely holy God?
 2. God is displeased with sinful man. The human heart has become defiled and abominable. We are given over to sin.
 3. "Unbelieving" means that fallen humanity deny the truth-claims about God. They deny God.

Romans 1:19-22 NAU - "because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. ²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools,"

4. They deny God's right to rule. They deny God's Law. They deny God's Redeemer – His anointed Son.

Psalms 2:1-3 NAU - "Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing? ² The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, ³ "Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!"

- B. Paul says they are defiled in both mind and conscience

1. The mind is the faculty of reason. Of rational thought. It is through the mind that human beings are able to relate to God. But the lost man's mind is corrupt. He is not able to think rightly about God. He is unable to approach God. His mind is bent towards sin.

2. We can see this with the wickedness during Noah's day

Genesis 6:5 NAU - "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

- a. God must give us a new mind, a new heart. He must renew our mind.

2 Corinthians 5:17 – "Therefore if any man is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

- b. God renews our mind in salvation – He gives us a new way of thinking. He sets our wills and affections upon Him.

3. Lost humanity is also defiled in conscience.

The conscience is the ability to discern good and evil. It is the testimony of God's Law written upon our heart.

But in our depravity, our consciences are hard and calloused. Paul described it in his first letter to Timothy.

1 Timothy 4:1-2 NAU - "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, ² by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,"

- III. In **Verse 16** Paul reminds us again that he is talking about those who profess Christianity

- A. These were members of Christian churches

1. "They profess to know God." In other words, they are claiming to have an experience with God.

2. Paul described them in **2 Timothy 3**

2 Timothy 3:4-5 NAU - "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power"

3. This is the definition of a hypocrite. He professes to know Christ and yet, by his deeds he is detestable and worthless. His life is a contradiction.

C.S. Lewis once said, "Of all bad men religious bad men are the worst."¹

¹ Daniel M. Doriani and Richard D. Phillips, *2 Timothy & Titus*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2020), 176.

- B. Paul describes them as they are in truth:
1. "by *their deeds they deny Him*"
 - a. I've often used the phrase, "Practical atheism"
Practical atheism is atheism in practice.
It is to profess to know God but live as if He does not exist.
 - b. God has no bearing upon their lives.
 2. Paul describes their lives.
"being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed."
 - a. "Detestable" – this describes how God looks upon fallen humanity.
The KJV translates it "abominable." God will drive the lost man forever from His presence.
 - b. "Disobedient" – This describes how the lost man looks upon God.
God is not worthy of his life. The goodness of God is forgotten.
He doesn't have a heart for obedience.
 - c. His good works are worthless.
The NIV translates it:
Titus 1:16 NIV - "unfit for doing anything good"

Conclusion:

1. These are important principles to remember. Outward purity cannot produce inward purity, but inward purity always produces outward purity.
2. You cannot make yourself pure before God by the outward things that you do.
The wicked man is entirely unable to do that which is pleasing to God.
3. Paul's words in **Verse 15** are double-edged.
For the Christian all things are pure. Our righteousness is in Christ, not in the outward things we do.
But for the unbeliever, nothing is pure. This doesn't mean they do nothing but evil. It means without Christ they remain defiled.
Titus 1:15 NAU - "both their mind and their conscience are defiled."
Titus 1:16 NAU - "detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed."