

**July 19, 2009**

**Titus 1:15-16**

Good morning. Take your Bibles. Turn to Titus chapter 1. We are going to wrap up this first chapter this morning. And it may be the most important sermon out of the chapter. Let me bring us up to the same page. Titus is a compact letter in which God is giving us his blueprint for establishing his church: how he wants us to be as the church. In the first several verses, Paul's description of his own ministry gave us a simple blueprint within the overall blueprint that laid out:

- who is in charge – that would be God,
- what the church is about – bringing the elect to saving faith and the saved to spiritual maturity,
- what message accomplishes that – the written inspired word of God, and
- how that message is communicated – through preaching - proclaiming it in our words and lives.

Then Titus addressed those who God wants in leadership in his church – elders, pastor, overseers – all referring to the same group of men – and the qualifications to be chosen as one of them – qualifications that are mainly about character but include a passion for the truth and an ability to teach it and defend it with sound doctrine.

And then last week we saw why – why elders must be in charge, why they must meet those qualifications, why they must be able to teach and defend the truth – because the enemy and even some church members themselves will destroy God's church with error and false teaching if not.

We needed that description of the false teachers – we needed to know who to silence and how. And today as we come to verse 15 and 16 God gives us his evaluation of those false teachers but in doing so, God addresses some of the most serious issues in our lives. In fact, today we will look at one of the few systemic – core, real – problems in the church today. In fact I fully expect a majority of the people in this room to hear this today and to simply reject it by thinking: 'that's wrong – that isn't what I've always thought – that isn't what I've been taught' or to hear it, accept it, and yet because it is so different from our filters, to walk out unchanged – and if that is how you or any of us respond, you might as well take a knife and cut these two verses out of your Bible. But understand – that if you do, you put your very eternal life at risk.

Let's look at **verses 15-16**.

*To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.*

*They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.*

Now before we start bringing this into today and looking at the timeless principles – we need to remember the context – but I also want to ask you to do something else – even before we get to the application questions today at the end, I will be referring to they or them a lot today in the context of Titus, but be thinking about how this might apply to you – how might that be true of you – how might that be true in my church. But here's the context again:

- **The false teachers that Titus was facing in Crete were JEWS.**
- **And the word for 'pure' there is 'kathara' – it means literally CLEAN.**
- **And what they were saying was that to really be saved – to be a Christian – it was fine to believe in Jesus but you had to keep the Old Testament LAWS - all the Jewish ceremonial and dietary practices.**

That if you did all the ceremonies and kept all the traditions and fulfilled all the commandments of men, all that you were supposed to do, you would purify yourself. In other words, they were working from the outside in. Which is what all sacramental or legalistic religion does – if you keep all the rules – maintain all the rituals – don't touch anything defiled or forbidden – you make yourself pure.

But if you don't keep the commandments of men – if you don't follow all that stuff – if you violate some of these deals – you defile yourself and become defiled before God. **The whole idea of all that stuff is to say that what you do on the outside can redeem or condemn you on the INSIDE.**

But Paul says those who are pure here in verse 15 are pure because of their faith alone. That's clear because **'those who are corrupted' – ie unclean – are specifically referred to as those 'who don't believe.'** **Being clean or pure or right before God – which is what is at stake here – is the result of FAITH alone.** Since in God's sight there is no purity except by belief, it follows that unbelievers are all unclean.

See Jesus said – and we're going to look at the passage here in a moment – but He said that it is not what comes into a man that defiles him, but that which comes out of him. So Paul says these guys are dead wrong – to the pure, all things are pure. If you're pure on the inside, then everything you do is pure. But to those who are corrupted – those who are unbelieving on the inside, nothing is pure. Whatever you touch, you defile.

If you're a Jew and you don't know God through Christ, you can keep all the Jewish ceremonies you want and all you do is defile them. You can take communion as a Roman Catholic and if you don't know Christ personally, your insides haven't been cleansed, you just defile the ceremony – make a mockery of the name of Christ.

Paul's not suggesting that the pure cannot sin or be tainted by moral failure or sinful behavior. But **the point is that those who are corrupted and don't believe cannot make themselves pure by sticking to EXTERNAL works.**

Turn to Mark chapter 7 with me to see where Paul is getting this. He knew the words of Jesus – he understood the heart and purpose behind what Jesus says here. **Mark 7:4-7, 14-23.** So again it is the inside that matters – and back in Titus in verse 15 they are so defiled or unclean on the inside, that Paul says:

*"In fact both their minds and consciences are corrupted."* He's trying to show the depth of their internal wrongness.

**Their mind means their intellect, their THOUGHTS, their desires, their purposes** are defiled. So whatever theology they hold – whatever they teach – is defiled.

**Their conscience means their moral JUDGMENT – their sense of right and wrong, their morality, their discernment** – that too is defiled. So you can't trust what they say. Why? Their mind is too messed up to conceive truth and they are too messed up to make true judgments. You can think back to our study of **Philippians in chapter 3 verse 19** when Paul says *"Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things."*

And here is why all of this is so crucial for us to understand. **If hearts are not purified properly – remember, by belief, by faith – although our good deeds or works or acts may shine brightly before people, they will still be REJECTED by God,** they will still encounter God's disgust by their foul smell. For God according to 1 Samuel 16:7 looks at the heart and his eyes according to Jeremiah 5:3 are on the truth. **People are JUDGED by God – we are judged by God - by the disposition of their hearts, not by their external deeds.** And though that is foreign to how we think – different than where we have grown to be accustomed in our thoughts – it is repeated throughout Scripture.

In **Haggai chapter 2**, God explains again through the issue of clean versus unclean that when the source is unclean, anything touched or done becomes unclean.

Until our hearts are truly reformed by faith, all the services we perform are just mockeries and God condemns every one of them. And yet – as John Calvin explains:

When man – though unclean in his heart – feels any remorse of conscience, he tries to remedy it by some ceremony or ritual or outward [thinking that if] it is sufficient to satisfy the minds of men [then] God ought to likewise be satisfied.

In other words: “I did this or I did that good deed or ritual or penance or whatever. That should cover it with God. God should just focus on that.”

But God is not satisfied. In fact that kind of hypocrisy is rebuked over and over in the Jews. In **Isaiah 1:13-15** God says:

*“Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations-- I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood;”*

Again in **Amos 5:21-23** God says:

*“I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies.[ listen to this:] Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps.”*

Do you see this? God is showing us that even the very things which He Himself commanded of His people were filthy and unclean when they were observed and abused by hypocrites. God’s Word is saying that **if we will have God approve our works, they must be according to His divine WORD – and His divine Word says they must begin in a heart purified by true faith.** And until we have learned to serve God rightly like that – in the proper manner and starting point – we do no good by our own works – even though we may flatter ourselves that they are of great importance and value and by that mindset we rock ourselves to sleep.

And the other side of this same coin – just a different expression of the problem – can be heard in, again, how Calvin explains it. Listen to this carefully:

*“According to their own notions they discharge their duty towards God and content Him with such payment. When they have fasted their saints evening, when they have refrained from eating flesh upon Fridays, when they have attended mass devoutly, when they have taken holy water, they think that God ought not to demand any thing more of them and that there is nothing amiss in them.”*

In other words they do what they want to do to show their supposed faith – their supposed purity – their supposed Christianity – they go to a church service on a Sunday, they put some money in the offering plate, they sing a song or two, whatever it might be – and that is all that it takes. But Calvin goes on. He says:

*“But in the mean time they cease not to indulge themselves in lewdness, whoredom, perjury, blasphemy, etc. – giving themselves to those vices and yet they think God ought to hold Himself well paid with the works they offer Him....The holiness of these men consists in trifles. They endeavor to serve God in the things the He does not require and at the same time leave undone things that He has commanded in His law.”*

In other words, **if we would have God approve of our works**, not only must they spring from hearts purified by faith, **they must be the works that GOD desires, not just what we want to do or find convenient to do for Him.**

To the pure – by God’s assessment – through belief – all things are pure. But to those who are corrupted – those who do not believe – nothing is pure – doesn’t matter what they do on the outside because the inside isn’t right.

And then Paul goes on in **verse 16**, look at that with me in Titus chapter 1. *“They claim to know God but by their actions they deny Him.”*

The word for ‘claim’ there is literally the term ‘**CONFESSION**’ – they confessed that they knew God – they claimed to be **Christian believers**. Remember, last week we saw that these false teachers in the churches causing problems with their deception were not outsiders – they were in the church – coming from within the congregation.

Do you get that? In these verses here at the end, the pure – the impure – the corrupted – the believers – he is describing people in the church – people just like you and me. People who would sit right next to you on the pew and claim the same thing you do: “I’m a Christian – I’m right with God.”

And yet God’s assessment of them is clear here – they claim to know God but by their actions they deny Him. Again – we’re reminded of **Isaiah 29:13** that we saw Jesus quote back in Mark where God says *“These people draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.”*

How do you know? Because **their actions deny that God is their God – their actions on the whole deny that their lives are SURRENDERED by faith to Jesus Christ**. You say wait a minute – they are doing good things – these are folks who are going to church – who are confessing a belief in Jesus – who are giving to the church – who are even doing things that the world around them and maybe even other Christians would say are good, Christian things to do. How can that be denying God by their actions?

Just like we said:

- **Doing the right things from the wrong HEART accomplishes nothing before God** – doing the right things from a wrong belief or no faith does not make us right or pure before God.
- **Doing what you decide are right things but leaving UNDONE the good that God wants you to do and hoping God will be ok with that accomplishes nothing before God**
- **Doing the right things but also continuing PURPOSEFULLY in the wrong things and hoping God will take what He can get accomplishes nothing before God.**

These people say they know God but the reality of their day to day life denies Him. In **2 Timothy 3:5** Paul says they have a form of godliness – they look good – there is a form of godliness – but it has no power. And in that verse God warns us to have nothing to do with them.

In fact, God’s displeasure with their facade is so great, that in the context of Titus chapter 1 Paul says *“they are detestable, disobedient, and actually unfit for doing anything good.”*

That word ‘detestable’ denotes what causes horror and disgust to God. It is a very strong word – same root as the word abomination.

When he says they are disobedient it means to the truth of the gospel – that Jesus is the only one who can purify your life and salvation is by faith alone – and disobedient to the Apostolic authority in the teaching God was passing down through His Apostles.

So actually they were the very opposite of what they were striving to be in their works. In fact, the last phrase of the verse says they are “unfit for doing anything good.” They cannot please God even when doing what God says is good to do because again – to

those who are corrupted – to those who do not believe the truth, nothing is pure. CS Lewis wrote that “of all bad men, religious bad men are the worst.” And that’s the case here.

See those who do not believe – cannot be made acceptable to God even by ritual purity because everything about them is unclean. **Their real problem is not ceremonial but moral – it is not external but INTERNAL. Their hearts remained corrupted because their trust was in what they DID to make themselves pure rather than relying upon the righteousness of Christ on their behalf.**

I’ve taken you there many times, but I want us again to see Jesus explaining this graphically scary. Turn to **Matthew 7:21-23**  
*“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*

*Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’*

*Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’*

These people before Jesus thought they were good – they were pure – they were ok with God – they would be the ones sitting on the pews next to you saying, yeah I’m a Christian – I’m going to heaven – I’m good with God. Why? Because they believed in their actions – their response to Jesus was “But Jesus – we prophesied in your name – in other words we talked about your truth – we drove out demons – in other words we stayed away from the really bad stuff – we performed many miracles – in other words, we did a lot of really go stuff.”

And what does Jesus say – he calls them evil doers – he says he never knew them.

Church **unless the foundation of one’s faith is built solidly on JESUS CHRIST crucified and raised from the dead, then it is a misplaced faith built upon a crumbling foundation.** And yet churches just like ours are full of people for whom the foundation of their faith is in their profession of faith or their baptism or a prayer they prayed or an assurance given by a parent or a pastor, rather than in Christ alone.

What does that it mean to be in Christ alone? Listen – the Word of God says:

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” **Romans 3:23**

Where God’s holiness demands perfection, all of us are far from it. And if you want to argue against that you don’t understand what it is to be human. And the result of that imperfection – of sin – the Bible says:

“For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” **Romans 6:23**

Our sin means our starting point is that we are spiritually dead – that we aren’t basically good but do bad things – we are dead – not just separated from God – but dead – walking around alive in the flesh but dead in the spirit. And that will end up in our permanent death in hell still separated from God. And there is nothing we can do about it.

“But God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” **Romans 5:8**

Since God loved us and since sin has to end in death, Jesus Christ who is God in the flesh not only came and lived the perfect life that we couldn’t live, but he died the death that sin requires in our place – on a Roman cross He really died to pay for sin so that God the Father could offer forgiveness that is just, and that’s what He does.

“If you will confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

**Romans 10:9**

The confession from your mouth has to match the belief in your soul. That confession is that you are making Jesus the Lord of your life – He is now in control, not you – and the reason you make that confession is because you believe with every fiber of who you are that He is God – proven by His return from death to life – and as God He alone can save you from your sin.

That’s what we see explained in **John 3:36**:

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not believe in the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”

And in Acts **4:12**

“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under Heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.

That is what God is talking about when he says those who are corrupted – who don’t believe – nothing is pure for them. That is what he is talking about when he says for the pure – those who believe – everything is pure. This is what is believed.

But here is **the grave danger that rocks the church today. The idea that as long as you PROFESS to know Christ, then all is well.** The idea that is sending people in the church – in this church – to hell today is the idea that as long as you claim to know Christ – then all is well. But note Paul’s warning again – “They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him.”

See **it has become common throughout history for imposters in the church to shun TRUE holiness and offer in its place a substitute to conceal their own wickedness.** We are so prone as human beings to make God’s standards much lower and prohibit those things He has not prohibited, because it is so much easier to just not do this or that and to do this or the other instead of letting God develop the pure heart in us that He requires.

See that is the connection to good works that we have to see in this passage. These false teachers or the impure are unfit for any good work because of the unbelief and rebellion in their hearts. Whatever works they do have no value before God. Those works lack the inner quality – the innate good and virtue and beauty of one who is redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and therefore divinely fashioned to glorify God by such works.

Folks think about it – that’s why the whole idea of “Good people go to heaven” is wrong. Saved people – redeemed people – forgiven people – **people who believe solely in Jesus Christ by faith go to heaven – but ‘GOOD’ people don’t go to heaven because there are no good people except for those saved by Jesus.**

And **their works are ‘GOOD’ because they bear the stamp of God** on them – they point to His glory – **they are done in humility and love and gratitude for so great a grace of salvation** shown to an unworthy sinner. **No MERIT is attempted or gained in those works** – only an offering of praise to God alone who is worthy of honor!

So this points to some huge questions today – please listen.

**1) What are you COUNTING on to save you from Hell?** Really.

Have you given your life in faith to Christ alone?

Are you banking on something else to make you pure or right with God? Because it is not going to work.

## 2) WHY do you do what you do?

Do you do (quote) what a Christian should – Do you do certain things as an attempt to appease God or to balance out the other things you do you know you shouldn't? Are you working on the eternal balance sheet mindset that God says nothing you can do can balance?

Why do you do what you do and what does that say about what you are counting on to save you from hell?

## 3) What is it that you DO and don't do?

Have you come up with what you think it takes to be right with God - acts or rituals or habits that you don't mind doing? Like maybe going to a church service – maybe giving some money now and then – or maybe it is not beating your wife or not getting drunk or not this that or the other. All good things.

But are you leaving out what you know God would have do in place of – or more likely – in addition to those things if you really mean it when you profess that Jesus is Lord?

*To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.*

*They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.*

How are you going to respond?

We are going to do something that we rarely do. If you grew up in church you will understand this, if you didn't let me explain it. We are going to stand and sing in just a moment. You don't have to sing. What you do have to do is respond to God. You can do that right where you are and just pray to God about what you feel He is saying to you. Or the altar is open, you can come kneel and pray here if you would like – if you need to get on your knees before God for any reason. Also – there will be godly men and women – our deacons and their wives – at the corners of this room. If you need to talk to someone or want someone to pray with you, then go to them and they'll do that with you right now.

God is here and He wants to do real business with you. Now it's your call.

Prayer – Song Response

Be seated

I hope you will continue to let the Holy Spirit encourage or convict your heart today. Our invitation may be over, but God's is not. And one last thing – if you are wondering how these verses fit into the blueprint God has been giving us – or if you just need to fill in your last blanks, the final statement is that **God's blueprint for His church is a people purified by grace through FAITH and doing good WORKS that He planned in advance for them to do.** Straight out of Ephesians 2:8-10 and here in Titus 1.

As we pray again together and sing a final song, use this time to continue to respond to Jesus – and to honor Him with your tithes and offerings. Let's pray.

Offertory

Announcements

Burton Good bye