

# (Through the Bible) Titus & Philemon

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of godliness, sound doctrine, and unity in diversity within church leadership as outlined in Paul's letters to Titus and Philemon.*

**Duration:** 55:54

**Scripture:** Titus 1:5, Titus 2:1, Titus 3:1, Philemon 1:10-21

**Topics:** "Church Leadership", "Christian Unity"

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## Description

This sermon delves into Paul's letters to Titus and Philemon, emphasizing the importance of sound doctrine, godliness, and practical Christian living. Paul highlights the need for appointing elders, teaching good works, and addressing false teachings within the church. He also exemplifies humility and love by advocating for Onesimus, a runaway slave, to be accepted as a brother by Philemon, showcasing unity in Christ despite social distinctions.

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## Transcript

Let's turn now to Paul's letter to Titus. The subject of Paul's letter to Titus is again the church and its elders. All these three letters, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus, relate to the church and its leadership.

And the first thing he seeks to do is establish order in the church and get, appoint elders to conduct the church in a proper way. And then in chapter 2, he speaks about sound doctrine. In chapter 3, he speaks about doing good works.

So you first have appointing elders, rebuking false teachers in chapter 1, teaching sound doctrine in chapter 2, and doing good works that come out of that sound doctrine which he emphasizes in chapter 3. Now, it's very interesting to notice that some of Paul's closest co-workers were not Jews. Paul himself was a very strong Jew, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, but the one who was his constant traveling companion was a Greek doctor called Luke, who wrote Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. And we see Paul work so closely with Luke, and the other person he worked closely with was Timothy.

Timothy was also half Greek, his father was Greek. And Titus was also Greek. And so there, in these people traveling together, Paul and Timothy and Titus and Luke, was a demonstration of this wonderful gospel of the New Covenant, that people from different nationalities could work together without any problem.

Not only without any problem, Paul's closest co-worker was someone who belonged to another nationality. If you find you can work only with Indian people, something is wrong. And if you're a Malayalee and you can work only with Malayalees, you haven't understood the gospel.

Or you're a Tamalian and you can work only with Tamalians, you haven't understood the gospel. The gospel made Paul work not only with people of another language, but another completely different nationality. That means it doesn't make a difference to me whether a person is Chinese or African or Russian or South American or North American.

Everything is, there's no, nothing that hinders our working together because of nationality. Temperament can be different, nationality can be different, language can be different. And yet some of these people may be my closest co-workers, and I found this to be true.

People are completely different, community, language, I can work together with. It doesn't matter where they are, and that's how it should be with all of us. And we must get out of these sectarian, narrow, communal ways of thinking that we have where we feel more comfortable with people just of our own nationality.

We have to say that such people have not seen the body of Christ. If you despise people of another nationality, if you despise people of a certain group, maybe there are certain national traits in certain people, there's no doubt about it. But when a person comes to Christ, and he's filled with the Holy Spirit, he's delivered from those national traits.

There are certain habits in a certain community, we know that. Certain communities act in a certain way. But when a person comes to Christ, he comes out of all that.

We don't deny some of these national traits or communities. For example, here, Paul tells Titus in verse 12, Titus was in an island of Crete, Crete is in the Mediterranean Sea. And Paul tells Titus, one of the Cretan prophets, that means one of their own religious preachers, not Christian, said about themselves, Cretans are liars, Cretans are evil.

They're like beasts, Cretans are lazy, and Cretans are gluttonous, these are Cretans. So people of a certain nationality may have certain traits, and he says their own people say they are like that. But when such a Cretan comes to Christ, and he's filled with the Holy Spirit, he won't be a liar, he won't be evil, he won't behave like a beast, he won't be lazy, and he won't be a glutton.

So don't judge a person according to his nationality, because you've seen 99% of people of that nationality or that community behave like that. You know, we have so many prejudices against people of different communities, and that hinders us from becoming spiritually rich. I must give you my testimony that God has made me spiritually immensely rich by fellowship with Chinese people, African people, people of different parts of India, American people, various types of people have made me spiritually rich, and my heart has been opened to godly people in all these communities and all these nations.

Godliness is not found in any one nation. And just because you find that people of a particular country are very arrogant, okay, that may be true. I've seen certain people from certain countries, particularly wealthy countries, they are very arrogant.

But the Christians in that country, I've seen some very, very humble people. So the Cretans may be liars, but the Christians in Crete are not liars. And people of this community, for example, may be very worldly

and they have no family values, but a Christian who comes out of that may not be like that.

So don't judge a Christian by what community he comes from. He's part of a new creation. That's very important.

That's why Paul had no problem having as his closest co-workers people of a completely different nationality. He didn't have any preference for his own nationality. And I say this to you, when you seek to find a co-worker and you have a preference for a fellow Malayali or a fellow Tamilian or a fellow Hindi speaking person from your particular state, you may not find the will of God.

You may completely miss the will of God because you've got, you said, Lord, I'm willing to do your will, but it must be someone from my community. God says, forget it. I'm not going to show you my will.

You just find somebody yourself and you will miss the will of God all your life. That's happened because they've got a rut in their mind. It must be somebody from my community who speaks my language.

I tell you, you'll miss the will of God. God will not show you who your co-worker should be because his plan for you may be for you to work with somebody from another nationality, from another country, from another part of India, and you're not willing for that. I just mentioned that in passing.

I believe there's a lot of things that need to be broken down in us before we can really be integrated and work together in the body of Christ. Without any distinction of race, intelligence, if I say I must only work with people of the same intellectual level as me, God will say, forget it, go and find somebody like that. I'm not going to guide you.

He won't say it like that, but you won't get any guidance. You'll find somebody, and you'll say, this is the one whom God led me to. You think it is, but it's not God.

You chose him yourself. You chose him because he was in the same intellectual level. You chose him because he was in the same community.

You chose him because he's the same temperament. That may be okay in marriage, but in co-working together for God's work, we need to be open to anyone whom God leads, who may be completely different nationality, language, culture, everything, intellectual level. Okay, now, in the first part of this letter, he says, I want to, I'm speaking here as a bondservant of Christ for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness.

Notice as Paul writes these letters towards the end of his life, his tremendous emphasis on godliness. Think of these last three letters of Paul's, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. How much does he speak in these letters about speaking in tongues? Zero.

How much does he talk in these letters about healing, physical healing? Zero. How much does he speak in these letters about prosperity? Zero. You take the apostle John at the end of his life, he wrote one John.

How much does he speak in one John about speaking in tongues? Zero. How much does he speak about physical healing? Zero. How much does he speak about prosperity? Zero.

See, these people, when they came to the end of their lives, they concentrated on the things which are absolutely most important. What does John speak about, love, obedience? What does Paul speak about, godliness, the secret of godliness in 1 Timothy 3. The truth according to godliness, Titus 1.1. If a man

wants to be a vessel, sanctified, he must cleanse himself, godliness. Don't have 2 Timothy 3.5. Don't have just the form of godliness, but the reality of godliness.

I think it's true that if you look up a concordance, I didn't have time to look it up myself, but look where Paul uses the word godliness. And you'll find he uses it much more in these last three letters. He hardly ever uses that word in the earlier letters.

He has come to realize at the end of his life, he also grew up to maturity, yeah, we have spoken about many, many things in our earlier life, about the coming of the Lord, and about speaking in tongues, and casting out demons, and healing, and all those things. But I say, I have come to see, he says, at the end of my life, the thing I need to stress is godliness. And you know you've come to maturity when you realize that is what you have to stress in your ministry.

That is the man I would like to listen to, a man who is mature and who has seen what Paul and John saw at the end of their life, that godliness is what builds the church of Jesus Christ today. Not tongues, and healing, and prosperity. We're not against those things, but those are not the things we stress.

So today in a world where people are preaching so many things, if you want discernment, if you want to know who is mature, look at the example of the apostles, and you will see for yourself the truth which is in line with godliness. There's a lot of other truths, there are truths like 2 plus 2 is 4, there are also many truths like that about the earth going around the sun, and those are also truths, but I'm now talking about the truth in line with godliness. He says that's the thing that matters, and God has made me an apostle for that.

And he says I'm writing to you Titus, and I left you in Crete, verse 5, so that you can set in order the things that are wrong, and appoint elders in every city. In every church, Paul was concerned towards the end of his life, there must be elders. Always plural, never one single pastor.

He never says appoint a pastor in that church, and appoint a pastor in that church. Always elders, people who are leading the church, two at least in a church, so that it's not a one man show. Elders means the one who is most spiritually mature, not the one who is oldest in age, the one who is spiritually an elder, who can lead a church.

The two people who are most spiritually mature, whether they are full time workers or secular workers, the two who are most spiritually mature in a church are the elders of that church. But what do we see very often today? Some young man who's got no maturity, just because he's got a degree from a bible school gets up and becomes a pastor, and there are many people sitting there in his church who are far more mature than him. That's not the church of Jesus Christ, that's an organization.

In the church of Jesus Christ, elders means those who are the most mature people in that church, who know God best. They are the ones who are supposed to lead that church. That's the way God wanted it, but a lot of things in today's Christendom are not the way God wants it.

Okay, it's not just a man who can preach well, let me say, it's the man who is most mature. So if you want to lead a church, you've got to grow to maturity, and it's very important. Evangelism, anybody can do, even a 15-year-old can do evangelism.

Okay, and the qualifications of an elder are listed here in verse 6 to 9, we saw that in Timothy 2. He must have a good testimony, he must, verse 6, he must be the husband of one wife, and having children at

home who believe. Not accused of dissipation or rebellion, because if a man's children are rebellious, he'll have a church which is rebellious. If he can't control his house, how can he control the church of God? See so much emphasis on the way a man brings up his children.

I respect a servant of God when I see his children, even when they are small. I've seen children of many, many believers in our church, and I've seen some children are just perpetually misbehaving. They can't sit quiet in the church meeting, and there are others who are always well-behaved.

It's got nothing to do with the children, it's got to do with their parents. Some parents are just so lax and undisciplined, they let their children do anything. Such people are totally unfit to have any responsibility in the church of God.

A man who is an elder in a church must have disciplined children. His children must learn to sit quietly in the meeting, even when they are small, otherwise how in the world can he be an elder in a church? A man whose children are always running around, and I've seen churches where mostly the elder's children only run around the mall. And I say, what is that man being an elder, just getting up there and preaching? He should resign and hand over his eldership to somebody else who can control his children.

I believe that. That's what God's word says. If a man cannot control his children, how in the world is he going to control such a big church? He can preach to them, but he's preached to his children and it hasn't succeeded.

How will it succeed when he preaches to the church? He must have his children under control. And when you folk, those of you who are married, if you want to have any responsibility in the church, make sure you can first of all practice in your home and control your children before you seek control of the church. If they cannot respect you, you can't expect to earn the respect of the church.

He must be not one who is quick-tempered and angry, you know, one who is ready for a fight. Such a person is not fit for an elder. No, people are always ready for a fight.

They must join some team of gundas or something like that. They're not fit to be elders in churches. Elders in churches are people who don't want to fight with anyone, who are peaceful.

And they must not be interested in money. Oh, so important. They must have no interest in gaining money from people visiting the rich people's homes.

They must be hospitable. Their home must be open to people who can come for help. They must love what is good, sensible, righteous, devout, self-controlled.

And an elder must be a man, verse 9, who holds fast to the faithful word of God in accordance with the teaching so that he can exhort with hygienic doctrine. Sound doctrine is a word that comes frequently in Timothy and in Titus. Sound means hygienic.

It's from the Greek word from which we get the English word hygienic. Hygienic doctrine. You know what hygiene is? Like in a hospital where they are keeping everything clean.

They wipe the floor frequently and clear it of germs. You're happy to be in such a hospital. A church is like a hospital where we treat sick people, spiritually sick people.

And the church must be a hygienic place. How many of you would like to go to a dirty hospital? A lot of churches are like that, like government hospitals where you get sicknesses which you never had when you went there. And some churches are like that.

Some new believer comes in and he develops some habits there which he never had when he was outside, bad habits. What sort of hospital is that? Because they don't have hygienic teaching, they don't have hygienic standards in that church. So he speaks about hygienic doctrine.

Doctrine that leads to godliness. If you want to build a church that pleases God, preach godliness. And he says, because there are many rebellious men and their mouths must be silenced.

Verse 10 and 11. Empty talkers. Don't let an empty talker get up and bore everybody in your church.

Sometimes I've had somebody get up and speak and it just goes on and on and he's boring. And I say, brother, can you finish in one more minute, please? Because we've got to hear some other people also. And if he doesn't finish in one minute, I get up and I put my arm around him.

And I say, brother, we heard you, we appreciate what you said. I think we should sit down now. Let's hear somebody else.

We've got to silence these empty talkers, not in a rude way, but we have a responsibility to make sure that people who've got nothing to say don't get up and say that in the pulpit. Because there are so many people sitting there spending one hour of their precious time. Don't waste their time.

Empty talkers. Very, very important that we don't let such people. We've got to silence them, it says in verse 11.

Because sometimes they are also deceivers. They upset whole families and the only thing they are interested in, verse 11, is money. If you have a preacher come to your church and you find that the only thing he's interested in is money, just send him packing off as soon as possible.

That's the best thing you can do for him. That'll be his salvation and the salvation of your church also. The only thing they are interested in, verse 11, is your money, it says.

That's how the Living Bible paraphrases it, the last part of verse 11. They teach and the only thing they are interested in is money. They are not interested in building up people to a godly life.

Do you see how much, as we have studied through the New Testament, how much the Bible speaks about money? It's a very important factor. Jesus spoke about it, Paul spoke about it, he warned Timothy about it. It's a very, very important factor and if you are a true servant of God, you will speak about it frequently and warn people about it.

I find very little of preaching about it today. Because most preachers are not faithful with money themselves. And that's why they can't speak about it and expose the sin that there is in Christendom today in this area.

And he says, you see, some of these cretins are like this and so that testimony is true. Therefore, reprove them so that they can become sound in the faith, verse 10, verse 13. And then I want to read to you this verse in the midst of this, you know, this cretin society.

Imagine what to be a light in a cretin society was like. You are surrounded by liars and gluttons and evil people and animal-like people and lazy people. And in the midst of that darkness, the church has to shine.

And in our society, it may not be these things, it may be these things, it may be other things. The very thing that our society specializes in, the church must be different. In every area, it must be different from the society around us.

If the society around us, no husband helps his wife in the work in the home, then in the church we must be different. We husbands must help our wives at home. In Indian society, a husband never changes the baby's napkins.

That's always the wife's job. He never goes to the toilet and washes the baby's bottom. That's the wife's job.

Why? Who produced that child? Did the wife produce it herself? Why doesn't the husband give the baby a bath once in a while? Why does he have to always leave it to the wife to do that? That's Indian society, but that's not Christianity. In Christianity, husband and wife are co-workers. They are co-workers in producing the children, they are co-workers in bringing up those children.

Definitely. That's how it must be. We are to be different from the society around us and be alike.

We are not to become slaves of the ungodly standards of the society around us. And further, in Titus 1.15, it speaks about, if you are pure, all things are pure to you. But if you are defiled, you'll find that nothing is pure.

Everything is defiled to you. That means some people see dirty things everywhere. Their mind is like that.

Always it's something dirty. Even in something good they see, they'll think of something dirty in connection with that. That's how our minds have been corrupted by the devil.

Now we've got to allow the Holy Spirit to purify our minds, that we don't always see something dirty when there's nothing dirty there. And that we don't always put a bad motive to everything we see. See, there's a verse in Proverbs which says, I'm not sure whether it's chapter 27 or it's one of those chapters, where it says, as in water, face answers to face, so the heart of man to man.

And the meaning of that verse is, if you do everything with the wrong motive, when you see somebody doing something, you'll always say he's also doing it with the wrong motive. If you preach only for making money, when you see somebody else preaching, you'll say he's also preaching to make money. Because you're seeing in his heart a reflection of your heart.

But he's not like that. He may not be impure like you. But you see your impurity reflected in him, even though he's not like that.

If you're pure, you'll find that you don't go around judging people like that. You will say, yeah, he may be doing it with a good motive. I'll never forget the story I heard of a very godly man, who belonged to a society of brothers, who decided to live in great poverty many centuries ago.

Lived a very simple life to follow Jesus. And they had taken some type of decision that we will live very simply and be witnesses for Jesus. And one day, this man, he saw one of his brothers dressed in a very good dress.

And all the other brothers in a simple dress, you know. And he looked at his brother with this very expensive dress. And he said to himself, perhaps under that good dress, he's got a humbler heart than I have under this simple dress.

That's a godly man. He does not judge that man by his dress. Now most people would look at that and say, that fellow must be arrogant.

Look at the way he dresses. So those whose minds are corrupt, they see corruption everywhere. Because they see their own heart reflected in that person.

He's pure. But when a man's mind is pure, he thinks good thoughts. He puts a good motive behind everything.

If you're the type of person who always puts a bad motive behind everything, it's because you've got some corruption within yourself. You've got to cleanse yourself. A godly man doesn't go around attributing bad motives to everything he sees.

To the pure, all things are pure. You remember when we saw Isaiah chapter 6. Isaiah saw the seraphs. One of the things the seraphs said, holy, holy, holy, the whole earth is full of his glory.

Is it true? You look at the whole earth and you say the whole earth is full of corruption. Everybody's a crook. The angels looked at the same earth and said the whole earth is full of his glory.

How is it the angels got a different opinion from you? Because their minds are pure and yours is filthy. They saw the glory of God in so many things. Look at the beauty of creation.

Look at so many wonderful things. Look at some wonderful believers here and there. But a corrupt man, he can only see filth everywhere.

To the pure, all things are pure. To the defiled, everything is impure. They say they know God, but they deny him by being detestable and disobedient.

Chapter 2. He speaks about doctrine. Hygienic doctrine. Verse 1. And what is hygienic doctrine? And when you read about all this hygienic doctrine he's speaking about, he's not just talking about forgiveness, justification, baptism in the Holy Spirit, water baptism, the coming of the Lord, the church, eldership.

This is not what he's talking about. He's talking about practical life. He says please teach other people hygienic doctrine.

And there are different groups of people here. Older men. There are older men in the church.

Teach them to be dignified, sensible, sound in the faith, deeply loving, and in perseverance. Older people should be full of love for younger people. If a man is older and he doesn't love and he's not dignified, I say something's wrong with him.

You should be more loving when you're older than when you're younger. Older women must also be reverent in their behavior. They must not be malicious gossips.

They must not be drunkards. And they must teach what is good. Can older sisters be teachers? Sure.

It says here they must teach. But who must they teach? They must teach, verse 4, the younger sisters. And what must they teach? They must teach the younger sisters how to love their husbands.

And they must teach the younger sisters how to love their children. And they must teach the younger sisters how to be sensible. And they must teach the younger sisters, verse 5, how to be pure.

They must teach the younger sisters how to be workers at home. Primarily, not neglect the home and go working in some office and neglect their children. They must teach them how to work at home first.

And they must teach them how to be kind. They must teach them how to be subject to their own husbands so that the word of God is not dishonored. What a lot of things older sisters can teach.

Why do you have to go teaching the Bible before you teach these things? These are the things an older sister should teach younger sisters. How can they teach such things to the younger sisters if they have done it themselves? This is hygienic doctrine. Practical Christianity is hygienic doctrine.

Please remember that. It relates to life. It relates to love.

It relates to being sensible. It relates to home life. It relates to bringing up children.

It relates to loving your husband, loving your children. It relates to being a worker at home, as women are supposed to be, primarily. It's a sad thing, let me say today, that many, many women have neglected their home and have started going to work to make money, to raise their standard of living, and neglect their children.

And that's how some of those children become godless. Now, I'm not preaching what I did not practice. I married a medical doctor 32 years ago.

She's never made one rupee in her life. We had only served four people with that medical facility. She never went to work because we had four children.

And we decided, medical doctor or no medical doctor, children are more important. Making money is not the important thing. And today, after 32 years, with all my four children born again, baptized, and living to the Lord, I don't have any regret that my wife and I made that decision way back when our first son was born.

And we made that decision when I was going through tremendous financial difficulty. I said, I am not going to make my wife work and live off her income. We live simply.

We live in a small little room. We lived in a small little room for a number of years. That's okay.

But we want to bring up our children for the Lord. And I tell you this because today there's another tendency in the world. They want to raise their standard of living and neglect their children.

I say your children are far more important than your standard of living. Please remember that. Years later, you'll have no regret.

If you have sacrificed something, maybe millions of rupees that you could have earned, but you brought up your children in godly ways. I say to all mothers and wives, don't ever neglect your children like it says here. Be a worker at home first, verse 5. And if your children have grown up and they're not at home, then

you can go and work.

That's okay. I'm not saying you shouldn't. But primarily, your responsibility is at home.

And if you're an older sister, you must be able to teach a younger sister how to be a worker at home. That's God's way. Now, there may be some exceptions where a husband is an invalid or something like that, where a woman has to go to work.

There are exceptions, but I'm talking about the general rule. Teach the young men to be sensible. This is sound doctrine.

In everything, you yourself, you're a young man, Titus, show yourself as an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech, in order that the enemy can never say anything to put us to shame. That's the principle. The devil should not be able to point to your home and to God and say, God, look at that Christian worker.

Look at what his children are doing. Look at that mother running around making money and look at the way her children are behaving at home and in the church. Look how rebellious they are.

They don't have any respect for their parents because the mother is busy making money. And the devil points that out to God, and what does God say? Well, God says, I can't say anything about that family, but look at that other family. That's different.

Don't let the enemy have anything to say that will put you to shame. Your children are a reflection of your values. Remember that.

You can fool everybody in the world that you're a spiritual man, but you can't fool your children. They know everything. Okay.

They know what you live for. And teach bond slaves to be subject to their masters in everything. That is, people who work in offices.

Most people in our churches are people working in a factory or an office. Paul tells Titus, teach them how to conduct themselves with their bosses in their office. They must be well-pleasing to them.

They must not argue with their bosses. How many preachers are there who tell people, don't argue with your boss in your office or factory? When a Christian argues with his boss in his office or factory, he's a disgrace to the name of Jesus Christ. I'm not saying he should not stand up for his convictions when he's asked to do something wrong.

I remember when I was working and I had to stand up sometimes to my senior officers and say, I'm sorry, sir, I'm a Christian, and that's against my conscience to do that, so please forgive me, excuse me, I can't do it. That's different. But to argue about something, no.

Not argumentative. And listen to this. Not pilfering.

Verse 10. Do you know the difference between pilfering and stealing? Stealing is if you go to work in your office and you steal the tape recorder from the office and take it home. That's stealing.

Pilfering is where you take a sheet of paper, just one sheet of paper, to write your private letter. You take a ball pen from the office. That's not stealing, that's pilfering.

Little things, which you say, ah, I have plenty of them, we can take it. Did they buy paper for you to write letters? No. It's in these small, small things that you find whether a man is godly or not.

If you're faithful in little things, you'll be faithful in much. And if you have done that in the past in some office, you must calculate the approximate cost of that and give the money back. That's true Christianity.

That's what Zacchaeus did. And I believe I've done that. I've kept my conscience clear.

No office in the world will ever say I took a paper or a pen or a pencil or a rubber from them. Nothing. If I did, I'd pay it back.

No pilfering. This is Christianity. Showing all good faith.

Why? Because this is how you adorn the doctrine. Have you seen ladies who want to adorn themselves? Why don't Christians adorn the doctrine they preach with a godly life? This is Christianity. Because the grace of God has come, teaching us, verse 12, to deny ungodliness, worldly desires, and live sensibly, righteously, godly in this present age.

Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior. This speaks about what the Lord has done for us in the past. Brought salvation.

What he's doing for us in present, verse 12. We live a life denying ungodliness. And what we look forward in the future, verse 13.

11, 12, and 13 are past, present, and future. Christ is coming. Why did Christ give himself for us? Verse 14, that he might purify for himself a people who are zealous to do good works.

If you are converted and saved by Christ, you must be a person who is very eager to do what is good. That is God's will for you. So this is sound doctrine.

This is hygienic doctrine. It's not just a question of justification and sanctification and baptism in the Holy Spirit. All these things are sound doctrine.

Practical Christian life is sound hygienic doctrine. A doctrine that does not lead to a godly life is not hygienic doctrine. It's the doctrine of the slums.

It's the doctrine of that filthy hospital that doesn't sterilize its equipment, that doesn't clean its floors. It's the doctrine of that filthy church that does not lead people to godliness. Hygienic doctrine is what we need in the church.

And Paul tells Titus, speak these things, exhort these things, reprove people with all authority. You know what is the great need in Christian pulpits these days? In two words I will say, godly authority. Godly authority.

That is what is needed in Christian homes and Christian churches today. Be one with that type of godly authority. And like it says here, let no one disregard you.

Chapter 3. He goes on to speak about how we are to live in the world, being subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed. And here is this verse which I have encouraged almost everybody in our church to hang up in their dining rooms and sitting rooms. Speak evil of no one.

Verse 2. Speak evil of no one. Have you seen these notices sometimes in some offices you see? Thank you for not smoking. If you come to my house you will see a notice.

Thank you for not gossiping. There is such a lot of gossiping that goes on in Christian homes. So much they sit together and talk about all types of people.

It is worse than smoking. You can smoke, brother, but please don't gossip. Do you believe that? You would stop somebody from smoking in your room, sitting room? Brother, can you please put out your cigarette? Why don't you do the same thing when a fellow starts to gossip? You think smoking is worse? Smoking is 10,000 times better than gossiping.

Any day. Speak evil of no one. Don't be contentious.

Be gentle. Show consideration for all men. Because once upon a time we were also foolish.

What's your speaking evil of that person? You were also like him once upon a time. God's grace has saved you from that. Maybe you are a better person today.

But that's God's grace. We were also foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved, spending our life in malice and envy, hating other people and hated ourselves. But the kindness of God redeemed us.

He saved us. Not on the basis of any good works. You see, this is Paul's emphasis even at the end of his life.

He said it in Ephesians. He says it here. God did not save us on the basis of any good thing we ever did.

He loved us and he saved us. Not because of our righteousness, but according to his mercy. Washed us.

Renewed us by the Holy Spirit. This is the secret of all Christian life. The Holy Spirit which he poured out upon us, whom he poured out upon us through Jesus Christ.

Throughout Paul's ministry and all his writing, he places an emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Justified by his grace and made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. And he says in verse 8, Speak these things confidently.

Confidently. Whenever you preach, verse 8, Speak confidently. I remember hearing what an actor once said.

A very famous actor. He said once to a preacher. He said the difference between us actors and you preachers is this.

We talk about when we are acting. We talk about unreal things as if they are real. But you preachers, you talk in such a sluggish way about real things as if they are unreal.

That's really true. I've heard so many preachers in my life. They don't have a fire about them.

They don't have a zeal about them. There is no earnestness. They are talking about eternal things, about eternal life and eternal death.

About hell where people can burn forever. They speak in such a sleepy sluggish way. Who is going to believe them? There must be confidence in what you speak.

They speak from the Bible as if they themselves are not sure whether this is really God's word or not. Don't ever be a preacher like that. If you are not sure, brother, don't speak.

Go and do business or go and do something else. If you are not sure this is the word of God. If you are not sure that this is inspired by God.

Please don't disgrace and bring confusion into the church by opening your mouth. Keep your mouth shut and go and do something else. If you speak God's word, speak it confidently because you believe it is what God has spoken.

These are things that concern eternity, eternal life, eternal death, heaven and hell. I believe it with all my heart. And that's why I speak confidently.

I preached confidently 40 years ago. And I preach more confidently today because I am more convinced of the reality of it. I approved the promises in this book.

And I found them to be true. I have confidence. This is not some fairy tale somebody has invented.

It's a great tragedy in Christendom. We don't have people who speak confidently. First, they don't know what God's word says.

And then they speak as if they are not sure whether this is God's word or not. And don't get into foolish controversies. Verse 9, strifes and disputes.

So much of emphasis Paul says at the end of his life about controversies, strifes, disputes. Don't get involved in all these things. If you find a factious, argumentative type of man, give him a warning first.

Brother, please don't. Let's not talk about this. Give him a second warning.

After that, just reject him. Because such a man is self-condemned. You know, once a man came to my house and he began to argue about some doctrine.

Some silly, small doctrine that was a big thing for him. It had nothing to do with the central things in the Christian life. I said, Brother, see, I don't want to talk about that.

I've got a different conviction. You've got a different conviction. Let's talk about Jesus.

Let's talk about his word, his work. And if you promise not to talk about this, we can sit and talk. He was some stranger.

And then after two, three minutes, again he would go back to that subject. Well, I gave him a second warning, like it says here. And I said, Brother, if you're going to go back to this, I'm sorry, I'll have to ask you to leave.

And so he, okay, we talked about the Lord for two or three minutes and back again to his favorite topic. And his topic was, by the way, you must not take medicine when you're sick. That's what he was trying to convince me about.

I said, Brother, if you want, don't take medicine. I'm not trying to convince you. But when I'm sick, I like to take medicine because I want to be healthy.

This is not a major issue for me. And finally I had to say, Brother, you come back to this subject again. I've got many other things to do.

Please excuse me. I led him to the door, opened the door, and said goodbye. God bless you.

But then he started writing letters to me. Now I know his handwriting. Before I opened the letter, I had teared up.

I have no time for these types of discussions and arguments about these things which are not central to God's rules. I don't want to waste my time in the church leading people to all these silly little crazy things that some people have got in their head. Okay, that's the letter of Paul to Titus.

Now we look at Paul's letter to Philemon. A very brief letter. One chapter, just 25 verses.

This is Paul's letter to a rich man, Philemon. Aphia, verse 2, is probably his wife. Archippus, whom we considered in Colossians 4.17, is probably his son.

And Philemon, I don't know, maybe he was in Colossae. And he was probably an elder of a church. And the church was meeting in his house.

And there are some wonderful things we see here. First of all, he says, grace to you and I thank my God always for you. I pray for you regularly.

See, Paul had to tell him to do some things now. And it's a great help when a man knows that you're praying for him, you love him. See, we don't pray for people we don't love.

If you look at the list of people you pray for, all of them are people you love. And a lot of other people we don't love so much. That's why we don't pray for them.

Paul prayed for Philemon. He loved him. And when he said that, Philemon was so delighted that this great apostle Paul found time to pray for him.

And that softened Philemon's heart to receive what Paul had to say. Now what Paul had to say was, he thanks him for all the love and faith he has. He says, I praise the Lord for what God has done in your life.

And I've had a lot of joy and comfort in your love. He's not flattering. Paul never flattered.

He wasn't buttering him because he wanted a favor from him. He was telling the absolute truth. Philemon was a godly man.

And so many poor believers had come to his home and he'd been very hospitable to them. He was a rich believer, an elder in a church that met in his large house. And so many saints had been refreshed.

And so, he says in verse 8, even though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you to do something, I'm not going to order you. I'm going to appeal to you. I'm now, verse 8 and 9, an old man, he says, and I'm a prisoner.

He wrote this from prison. I'm an old man, Paul the agent, and I'm a prisoner. You owe your life to me.

You know, you were saved through me. And I could order you to do something, but I will not order you. I beg you.

See the graciousness of the servant of God, the apostle Paul. A wonderful example for us. That when we speak to people who are converted through our ministry, who respect us so highly that they will do anything for us.

I know people like that in this country who will do anything for me. They'll even lay down their life for me. And if I order them to do something, I know they'll do it.

But I never order them. I will beseech them. That's a true servant of God.

He never takes advantage of his authority. A very good example for all of us to follow. When we go somewhere and people are blessed through our ministry.

And when they are blessed, they are willing to do anything. Don't take advantage of their willingness to do anything. Be gracious.

What does he want to tell them? What does he want to tell Philemon? He says, you know, there's a man called Onesimus who is your slave. And he got upset or something happened and he ran away from your house. And he ran away and he came here to Rome.

And in God's sovereignty, he came in touch with me. And I led him to the Lord. And he's born again now.

Now I know, according to the laws, if a slave runs away, you've got every right to kill him. You've got every right to do what you like with him. Because slaves had no rights in those days.

The government was on the side of the masters. They were not servants who got to pay. Slaves means they are bought like you buy furniture.

If they ran away, they had every right to be killed. And he says, but now I'm asking you for this favor. When Paul asks for a favor, he's asking nothing for himself.

He's asking for somebody else. He would never ask a favor for himself. He's really a godly man.

He wants a favor and when he's saying all this, you think he's going to ask for something for himself. No, he's asking for somebody else. And he says, when Onesimus comes back, he's not going to come back as a slave, verse 16.

He's going to come back as a brother. He's saved now. Once upon a time, he was just a slave in your house.

Now he's a brother. And maybe, he says, maybe God used his running away from you, verse 15, so that he can come back as a brother to you. An especially beloved brother to me.

How much more to you? A brother in the flesh and in the Lord. If then, verse 17, you regard me as a partner in the gospel, please accept him just like you would accept me. You know, this reminds us of how Jesus is speaking to the father.

You know, Jesus could say something like this to the father. This child of yours ran away from your house, lived in sin, lived a godless life, and I found him, and I brought him back, father, and please accept him. And accept him as you would accept me.

That's how we are accepted by Jesus, by the father, as he accepts Jesus. Paul's got that same spirit. He says, how should you receive Onesimus? Supposing you see me coming to your house, Philemon, how would you receive me? Please receive Onesimus like that.

And look at this. This is the spirit of Christ again. If he has wronged you, if he has run away with some money from your house and cheated you, please tell me how much it is.

Charge it to my account. This is what Jesus said. Charge that to my account.

This is the spirit of a godly man. Charge it to my account. I'll pay you whatever he owes you.

Of course, I want to mention, Philemon, that you owe me your own self, your life you owe me. But I won't mention that. Whatever he owes you, I'll pay it.

What an attitude for a man to have to somebody he converted. Here's a man who got converted and he was in terrible debt. And this preacher, instead of collecting money from him, tries to help him out.

Have you seen preachers like that? And Paul was not some rich man getting money from all over the place. From the little that he earned with his tent making, he said, I'll help you a little bit. With what I earn, I can give you a little bit from my savings and give it to you to clear your debt.

Boy, what an example. Think if India had more servants of God like this, who are here to help poor people with the little they have, instead of trying to get what they can from poor people. And he says, And you also please prepare me a lodging because I think I'll be freed from my prison soon.

And I'll be able to come to you. And he says, all these co-workers of mine are also greeting you. Now, what I want to say is, Philemon, God, Paul did not tell Philemon, Now, don't keep him as a servant, give him one room in your house.

No, he was still a slave. Paul did not carry on a crusade against slavery. He knew that if he carries on a crusade against slavery, he will not be able to build a church.

To carry on a crusade against slavery is a good thing. But if you carry on a crusade against slavery, he knew in that time he will not be able to build a church. His calling was not to carry on a crusade against slavery.

There are some people who are called to do that. Abraham Lincoln, when he was president of the United States, he carried on a crusade against slavery. Okay, let him do that.

But Paul realized, I have only one life and God has not called me to do this good thing. God has called me to do a better thing. Now, that's a word for us today.

You can get taken up with some social cause or liberation theology or something like that and say, that's what we must do. Well, you can do that. That's a good thing.

But you'll miss the best thing. The best thing is to save people from hell and to build the church of Jesus Christ. You can have a choice.

I'm not saying this is not good. But I'm saying you're missing the best. And the good can be the enemy of the best.

So, that's what we learn in this letter. He said, take him back as a slave. And so, when the church met in that house, he was brother Onesimus and brother Philemon.

After the church meeting was over, he was Onesimus the slave and Philemon the master. What a demonstration of the unity in Christ. The Lord does not come to abolish all social distinctions.

He did not come to establish communism to make everybody equal. Philemon and Onesimus were not equal. That's one book that shows that the Holy Spirit is not a communist.

He didn't come to establish communism. Philemon remained the rich master. Onesimus remained the slave.

But they were one in the church as brothers. Let's pray.

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