

Relationship in the Ministry

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 18 May 2015

Preacher: Tom Holland

[0:00] Amen. Tonight marks the concluding lesson in our study in the book of Titus and the final lesson!

Teachable. And we'll start a new lesson this September, if the Lord wills, that we still are on earth and still here. Now, I already started out with a mistake.

I said today we're going to look at the concluding six verses, and actually seven, so I've already messed up, but concluding seven verses of Paul's message to Titus, and Paul has for his young protege some last words on relationships.

He's going to talk about relationships. At least that's what John MacArthur and I concluded. He has this to say, beginning in verse 9 of chapter 3, but avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

Reject a factious, I hope I did that right, man, after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.

[1:42] When I send Artemis and Tychius, I don't know if I did that right, to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there, diligently help Zenos, the lawyer, and Apollos on their way, so that nothing is lacking for them.

Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds, to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.

All who are with me greet you, greet those who love us in the faith, grace be with you all. In the 20th and now 21st century, the church was marked by a number of kind of self-guided quests.

Some churches were out for social justice. We saw a quantum rise in political activism.

Seeker-friendly atmospheres were built.

Some churches in the 20th century and into our century stand for the rights of homosexuals to be included in mainstream Christianity and in the pulpits.

[3:03] Some churches support the gristmill of the abortion industry. Surprisingly, we have some of those churches in this town. Now, none of this or none of that has anything to do with God's instruction to the church down through the centuries.

God's plan has always been that churches be strong in the surrounding culture by proclaiming the transforming gospel of Christ in such a way that it would be attractive, and I mean that in a positive sense, to the lost.

I taught the gospel to my brother-in-law last Wednesday, and I made it attractive because I said, we're all going to die, and we're either going to go to heaven or hell.

There's no third place. That's where we started. By its very nature, the church is built on relationships.

First and foremost is our relationship with the Lord Jesus. That's primary. He is the Lord of the church, and therefore He is our leader.

[4:22] He's the head. Second, the church deals with believers' relationships with each other. This organization, this Monday night group, we have kind of a unique relationship compared to even the wider church body.

And then we have a relationship with the surrounding unregenerate society that's all around us. And by the way, I've just described the first three chapters that make up the book of Titus.

That's the outline. So Paul, tonight, is going to close his letter to Titus by describing the relationship he is to have with the other church leaders on the island of Crete.

And these are words from the Holy Spirit, and therefore they apply to the church down through the generations. They have application to us.

And Paul gives closing words on four areas of church life that will benefit the church on Crete and every New Testament church. He talks about relationships with false teachers, relationships with factious people, relationships with fellow servants, and relationships with faithful friends.

[5:48] And the first one is false teachers. But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

There were men running all over the isle of Crete claiming to represent the Lord, claiming to be one of His servants, and desiring to teach the Word.

And the truth is that these men were enemies of God, enemies of Christ. They were spiritually corrupt and bankrupt.

They were shunned, or should have been shunned, by the church because of what they did to God's truth and how they mishandled the truth of God.

Pray we never have men in the 21st century that mishandle the Word of God, right? I'm glad we have one that handles it correctly. There's one or two other churches in town that do that.

[6:57] Maybe. These men were actually planting the seeds of discord and confusion everywhere they went. They were emissaries of Satan sent to deceive by teaching lies, and they did it for sordid gain.

And if I didn't learn anything in this whole deal, I've learned that sordid is not sordid. I pronounced it sordid for the first 67 years of my life, and I found out it was sordid.

Now, such evil men make up a formidable army of false teachers that were deluding believers about core truths of the gospel of Christ.

Most dangerous of these men were Jews sent to promote a form of Judaism that they wanted the churches to adopt, claiming it was necessary to obtain salvation.

These were the Judaizers. We've been talking about them. And these men caused great damage to the cause of Christ on Crete, and Paul commanded that they be refuted, they be silenced, and they be reproved.

[8:18] According to Paul, these men claimed to know Christ, but by their deeds they denied Him. He says they were detestable, disobedient, and worthless for any good deed.

Now, this language is similar to what we've already heard because of Timothy and Paul's instruction to that young protege. Timothy had to deal with false teachers, and Paul told them they would be men who had a form of godliness but denied its power.

These men that Paul was talking about were not disobedient believers. They were not believers at all.

They had their own agenda, and it was being driven by Satan. I dare would say that these men, some of them were the angels of light that Paul talks about in 2 Corinthians chapter 11.

We know that they were not believers because they espoused ungodly doctrines and lived ungodly lives, and that's the test.

[9:33] How do we live? Quite honestly, I was very tired when I was finishing up this lesson after putting 50 hamburger patties together, but this sounds like many of the television evangelists we have plaguing the airwaves today.

I put that in when I was tired, but I think it's still true. Paul, of course, had been followed by false teachers everywhere he went. They were there to refute what he was preaching, and he knew just how dangerous these men were, and he was familiar with just how persistent they could be, and they were persistent.

Paul was quite acquainted with the master of false teachers, the devil himself. He did battle with him his whole ministry. He was going to be the great emissary of Satan, Saul.

He had an encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus, and everything changed for eternity, not only for him, but for us. So Paul starts by telling his faithful to avoid or to shun.

Very interesting. That is a word that means to turn oneself around or to turn away from something or someone. That was Paul's admonition to the churches.

[10:58] It's what he told church leaders. It's what he told the membership on the Isle of Crete. Avoid these guys. They were to avoid the morally and spiritually destructive false teachers.

They were restricting the preaching and the spread of the true gospel. The New Testament is very clear as to just how destructive the false gospel can be.

We're learning that in here on Sunday morning going through Galatians. Where Paul, you know, in that first chapter said, if anyone preaches to you another gospel, a different gospel than the one I'm

preaching to you, let him be anathema.

Let him be the cursed of God, the eternally damned of God. There's a number of reasons why this is so destructive to the false gospel.

It's so destructive to people. It shipwrecks the soul. It leads to blasphemy. It can ruin those who hear. It produces ungodliness and it spreads like gangrene.

[12:11] And there's many churches in our culture that teach and preach an erroneous gospel. There's just no other way to put that.

I read the latest Barna thing says America's down to 77, only 77% of Americans are Christians. How many? 77%.

My question for that is, where are they? Yeah, where are they? Where are they? They could elect... Sorry.

Pregnant pause. They could elect every president, every vice president, every congressman, every senator, you know, every governor. 77%.

Of course, if you read Barna closely, you know what he says? A Christian is someone who has been to church at least one time in a year. That's how... That's the...

[13:08] Well, that's probably Christmas or Easter. Yeah, that's the C&E; or I'm going to add Mother's Day. I call them quees. Yeah. In this one verse of Scripture, Paul mentions four errors the false teachers were spreading.

Foolish controversies, genealogies, strife, and disputes about the law. Foolish is from a Greek word where we get the word moron.

And you all remember from the Gospels, it's a serious thing to call God foolish. They have a strong language. Controversies come from a word for contentious.

Is it contentious or contentious? This is a warning about Christians becoming involved in futile arguments on matters of philosophy, of theology, that is based solely on human reasoning rather than God's Word.

You know, I hear this all the time. People will say, well, you know, God as I perceive Him to be, or I don't care what you perceive me, I want to know what He is from the Word, you know.

[14:20] False teachers were famous for this. They'd have these endless debates and discussions and, you know, it was endless. And then they would distort and contradict Scripture.

They're famous for that and it's easy to do when you've got a demon whispering in your ear. You know, and you don't have the Spirit of God revealing truth to you. Creating this void and understanding, they then fill the void with ideas and notions that confuse and mislead God's people. People are easily misled. I mean, I'm telling you, they're easily misled. False teachers do this by undermining a person's trust in God's revealed truth.

Now, that should not at all be surprising to anybody in this room. That takes us right back to the first lie in the garden. Hath God truly said that was the fall of the human race?

When the serpent, Satan, indwelling a serpent, said, Hath God truly said? Every lie that has entered the human family since then began right there with that one lie.

[15:40] A challenge to the Word of God, meaning God's authority, that was given to Adam directly from God.

And I still every day to tell Diane, you know, well, you know, if I'd been there, we'd be worse off.

Well, you know, the women plunged us, it says, Adam, who was with her. He didn't stop her.

I can't win that argument. She's right. In addition to the worthlessness of foolish controversies, there is also the worthlessness of believers becoming involved in interpretations of genealogies.

Now, I have to be real careful here because we kind of like Ancestry.com. It's kind of interesting, you know, to find out how many went to prison and how many, I found out a couple of weeks on related to Alexander Graham Bell or he's related to me.

This is obviously, first of all, not a condemnation of the genealogies found in the Bible. We probably don't study them enough, but they're real interesting.

[16:47] I think you did something on that not too long ago. Huh? Yeah, and the five women or four women, which is fascinating to me. I mean, these were amazing women.

Some of them, you know, prostitutes and everything. This is not a condemnation of genealogies in the Bible, and I don't think it's a condemnation of Ancestry.com.

I think to understand what Paul was talking about, likely, we have to remember something.

Genealogies were vitally important to Jews.

Boy, they were big on that. And I can't prove it from Scripture, but I'd almost guarantee you when somebody came on the scene and declared himself to be the Messiah, and many did, they had guys that were paid to go down to the temple and look up their genealogy.

Well, was this guy born in Bethlehem? Was this guy, you know, had all these things, the prophecies? So, genealogies were really important to Jews.

[17:57] By the use of genealogy, the Jews established their national identity. They placed themselves within the Old Covenant.

it determined what tribe they belonged to. It determined whether or not they were fit for temple service. It even got down to determine the distribution of land.

And we could go on. Interesting, when Titus Vespasian took Jerusalem and burned it to the ground, all those records were destroyed.

Guys in Israel today will say, well, I'm tribe of Benjamin, or I'm the tribe of Judah, they don't know. It's rank speculation. They don't know. The records burned up.

And I think God did that on purpose. But they were destroyed. Well, by the time Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus, the old law had been replaced by the new law.

[19:01] You can read by that in Hebrews chapter 8, verses 7 to 13. There was no need for Jews to use genealogies to dispute over their identity as a nation or a tribe or a family.

Christ said in Romans 10, 11 to 13, there is no distinction between Jew and Greek for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him for whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

for Christians to waste valuable time disputing over foolish matters such as one's ancestry is unprofitable and useless.

The only genealogy that ultimately matters to Christians is Christ. His genealogy serves as proof of both the Bible's inspiration and His deity.

the Messiah would come from the seed of Abraham, Genesis 12, 1 to 3. He would come from the tribe of Judah, Genesis 49, 10.

[20:11] The family of Jesse, Isaiah 11, 1. The house of David, Jeremiah 23, 5. This is precisely what happened as the New Testament writers, including the Apostle Paul, reveal.

The third area that Christians on Crete face is referred to as strife. That is a word that carries with it the idea of all kinds of self centeredness, rivalry, contentiousness about the truth.

And then the fourth area Paul mentions is disputes about the Mosaic law. Jews were constantly arguing over how to interpret various laws that Israel had been under for 1600 years.

And you know, I'm told that among the Orthodox Jews of today, that dispute continues. They still argue over it. And they even came up, you remember, the father of works, and you can't walk over 1500 feet from your home on the Sabbath, and the danger is you'll get a tack on your sandal, and that's carrying a burden, and that'd be a violation.

And if you see a man that's been wounded, you can stabilize him, but if he improves, you've worked on the Sabbath, and that's a sin, and you know, it goes on and on and on.

[21:30] And Jesus, you know, when he was on, he just shook his head. He just shook his head. And he just said, man wasn't invented for the Sabbath. And he just, I'm sure he just was amazed.

What's this factious people? reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.

Now, reject there is an easy word to interpret. You know, it means have nothing to do with or refuse. Factious is a bit more difficult. We really don't use that very much.

I've never used it in a sentence out in the culture. It's a bit more difficult in America. It comes from a Greek word from which we ultimately get the word heretic.

And that kind of makes it a little more understandable for the American mind. A factious person will not submit to the word, to the authority of scripture, or even to the godly leaders in the church.

[22:46] Such a person becomes a law unto themselves. A factious person is one who causes dissensions and hinders the body of Christ.

Paul says from these we are to turn away. They breed disunity in the church. I remember Tom Eliff one time talking to me about he had a factious person in his congregation and the guy finally came to him and he said you know Dr.

Eliff he said I think God is really leading me to leave Dell City. Tom said you know we'd really miss you but I know a good church I think you would really like.

I said Tom did you dislike that pastor or something? But Tom went along and said yeah I think God probably is doing that. Don't you think it's time you maybe want to? He said yeah I feel sorry. I said well we wish you well. Be warmed and well fed and get out of here. They cause dissension and they hinder the body of Christ. Paul also talks about fellow servants.

[23:54] When I send Artemis or Tychus to you make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis for I have decided to spend the winter there. Diligently help Zenos the lawyer and Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them.

Now there's a transition there. Paul has gone from condemning false teachers to commending church leaders. These were the men that God was using to build his church on Crete.

Paul asked Titus for two favors. He wants him to visit him. Come visit me. I'm going to winter at Nicopolis and he says I got a couple of two of my fellow servants.

I want you to take care of them. Two of my fellow servants. Now apparently and I didn't pick this up until I was studying Paul was not sure who he was going to send to ultimately replace Titus because it says there when I send Artemis or Tychus he didn't know which one he was going to send.

It had come down to those two. Now let me tell you everything we know about Artemis. That's it. We don't know anything.

[25:11] We don't know anything about Artemis. Obviously Paul had confidence in him. Obviously he had godliness and leadership qualities or he wouldn't be named here.

He was apparently a faithful pastor, teacher. He met the qualifications to minister on Crete. Now we know a bit more about Tychus.

He's mentioned a number of times in the New Testament. He traveled with Paul on some of the missionary journeys. He delivered Paul's letter to the Colossians and probably to the Ephesians.

Paul refers to him in scripture as my beloved brother, a faithful servant, a fellow slave of Christ, and a faithful minister. This was one of the two men that Paul chose to replace Timothy.

Let me back up. This was the man that Paul chose to replace Timothy as minister at the church of Ephesus. So he was in the line of the Ephesian church ministers.

[26:19] And Paul asked Timothy to come visit him in Nicopolis. There are nine cities named Nicopolis in the New Testament, so take your pick.

It was one of those nine. Before leaving Crete, Paul wanted Titus to help Zenos the lawyer and Apollos so that nothing would be lacking in them.

Now, we don't know anything about Zenos the lawyer. In fact, we don't know if he was a Roman lawyer or a Jewish expert on the Mosaic law, which were referred to as lawyers.

And actually, this may be the only place anything is ever said positively about a lawyer in the Bible. You know, I can't think of anything else.

We just don't know anything else about Zenos. Apollos is mentioned many times in the New Testament and it is always favorable.

[27:22] He was a converted Jew. He was an eloquent preacher. Though a Jew, he was from Alexandria in Egypt. We do know that Paul held both men in high regard and wanted to make sure they were cared for on their journeys.

the spirit of mutual support and care should always characterize Christ's church. It's what we're doing in the Ukraine and China, in Vietnam, in Bartlesville.

This is especially true of the spiritual leadership, caring for the flock, caring for the hurting, caring for the needy. under the sovereign Lord, leaders are independent, called, and interdependent, I'm sorry, called and commissioned to trust and assist one another as fellow servants of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And then Paul closes the great letter to Titus, talking about faithful friends. Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs.

How do you meet pressing needs? Good deeds. Good deeds. So that they will not be unfruitful. You know, it tells me something. A good deed is fruit.

[28:45] That's fruit bearing. All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Paul gives a last word on faithful friends.

He wanted all believers to engage in good deeds and meet needs. Now that comes from the Holy Spirit. Good for the 21st century, good for the 1st century, everything in the middle.

One minister cannot meet the needs of all his people. It takes a church of believers pulling together.

Every believer has a spiritual gift that is to work together for the benefit of the congregation and the Lord. We're to be engaged in good deeds and meeting pressing needs of our fellow believers. And I want to stress their pressing needs. we all have needs, right? I like what Dr. MacArthur says. He says, I don't deal a lot with your personal problems because they're going to go away and be replaced by worse ones.

[29 : 56] But pressing needs is a whole different thing. We had a little lady in this church years ago. I can't remember her name. McGuire? Was her McGuire? Yeah.

And her husband had died and she was real fixed income. She set her thermostat on about 42 in the winter. Well, we finally found out about it. We went over and put it on 78, you know, like to burn her down.

Yeah, we paid that bill. I mean, pressing needs. When a church does this, it becomes a beacon to the world.

It attracts unbelievers to the light of salvation. And I don't know if we still do it or not, but at one time, our motto here was the beacon on the hill.

And we had it in our little visitor's handout. And I know that because I wrote it. Not breaking, I just did. It's the only good thing I've ever done. May it always be so until Christ returned, that the church would be the beacon on the hill.

[31 : 04] And then Paul closes with a tremendous final word. He says we are to love others in the faith. Wow, what a novel idea for the 21st century church.

Love one another. Love one another in the faith. And then Paul gives a sign-off to every believer in every age, including the men in this room right now.

Paul's faithful friends down through the generations. He says this, grace be with you all.

And with those words, I'm incapable of adding anything else other than grace be with you all. the things that can a little love one people who are the people who lives lives lives lives lives!

!