

A Practical Study of Titus

Growth Toward Godliness “Beginning to Look More Like Jesus”

Study Number Seven – The Proof of Godliness – Titus 3:8-11

Two years ago this next August, Pearl and I celebrated our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. We were way up in the Pacific Northwest at the place where we were married. It was so fun to go back to church and see all the old friends and under God’s sovereign direction, to be up there on ministry so we could be there in that place and relive all those experiences.

I can remember driving back from Salem to Albany after dinner to where my folks reside. Pearl looked across at me and in her own little way she said “Honey, I think I’ll keep you. It’d take too long to try to train somebody else.”

I didn’t answer that but I’ve sure done a lot of thinking about it since that time. You know, marriage is a training process. Too oftentimes confrontation and conflict give us the excuse for not accepting the challenge of deepening our relationship. And we have lived by a principle in our marriage that confrontation and conflict provide opportunities to deepen our relationship.

You know the longer I live with the Lord, the more I see that my marriage is a laboratory of my relationship to Christ.

For through all of the circumstances and difficulties that come into our lives, it is a training process to develop us in a godly lifestyle.

Too oftentimes we're totally unprepared for the stuff that life throws at us when it comes at us on the blind side and we don't learn what we need to learn. So many times the Lord puts that lesson back by us again and again and again.

And that's true in marriage. As I reflected on her words I realized that I had been training her too. And through the circumstances of life, God had brought us closer and closer to that desired oneness that we knew that we both were longing for.

Behind a deepening relationship with the Lord is that training process that we discovered back in chapter 2. Always His grace, never gives up. Through the confrontation, through the conflict, through the chastening experiences, He's much at work to make us more like His Son.

We're talking about growth toward godliness in the series. We've seen that most of the godly life is centered around the intake of truth into our lives.

Study number 1 we saw the process of it. It's from faith to food to fruit.

Study number 2 we saw a picture of it.

Number 3 we saw the perversion. They turned away their ears from the hearing of the truth.

When we got into chapter 2 we saw the five different groups, godliness in relationship, how you're supposed to act toward me and how I'm supposed to act toward you.

Our last study we talked about the relationship of authority to our godly and spiritual lives.

Then I shared with you a principle at the beginning: godliness is the result of learning to live with divine authority.

We discussed that so many times our excuses of “can’ts” really need to be changed to “won’ts” because it uncovers an unsundered will—an unwillingness to allow Him to be Lord.

If I’m making progress in my Christian life—I’m submissive to His will, obedient to His Word, and available for His work in and through me.

The miracle of salvation as we looked at last week is it’s ALL God’s work. It’s not human works that we perform and as a result, God is obligated to give us salvation.

Salvation is an act of God’s grace. He offers the gift. What we

were before we became Christians—we were rebellions. What He did—He provided salvation as a gift. And what we are, we learned in the last verse of the last study—we become heirs and joint heirs. We become sons in His family, sons in His family and heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ of all that's in store for us for the future.

Now that brings us to verse 8 tonight in chapter 3 in study number 7. We only have 4 verses to look at in this particular study but there's much in it and I want to just take time to discern each of the phrases and try to break it down for you so we can see the contribution that it has to the whole.

Basically Paul is zeroing in on the game plan for the island of Crete. Titus you're going in there on a missionary responsibility. In order to correct all these situations that I've outlined, and have an effective ministry, we've got to have some kind of a plan. And it is outlined in these verses.

Verse 8.

v. 8 Trustworthy is the word, and concerning these things I am desiring you to be speaking confidently, in order that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good works. These things are good and profitable to men.

I want to start with that first phrase:

“Trustworthy is the word.”

You know moving about I get to be on several campuses too and I guess one of the things that's kind of shocked me a little bit is the conflict that's going on in the Baptist denomination right now with regard to the inerrancy of Scripture. You know you always have felt that there would at least be those who would hold to the position of inerrancy until the Lord came.

With being in Waco on Fridays I've discovered that it's a great deal different and the furor and the conflict is very great.

I was on a radio broadcast with three or four other ministers here some time back and I was the only one that presented in the group who held to verbal inerrancy, the inspiration and the authority of the Scriptures.

It's almost like there is a subtle movement about in the religious community to destroy, to erode our confidence in the Word of God so we've got an excuse for not reading it. So we've got an excuse for not obeying the principles, because after all we can't rely on it.

It's almost like the business of authority last week. We have destroyed confidence in leadership so we've got an excuse for doing our own thing. You can almost find the same thing seething in much of Christendom today. If we can destroy confidence in the Word of God then we've got an excuse for leaving it there and let it be covered with dust and not live by its principles and allow it to become a part and parcel of our lives.

Titus, before you go to Crete, you've got to trust your instrument. If the whole focus of the godly life is on taking in truth, then you've got to trust what you're using.

And so he focuses on that in this first phrase.

“Trustworthy is the word, and concerning these things”—
WHAT THINGS? All the things that I told you to this point in this letter.

“I am desiring you to be speaking confidently”—in other words, go on to Crete and say “God said it and I believed it and that settled it!”

Don't question it. In other words, you can count upon the Word of God. It'll do what it says it will do. It will settle the future. It in fact is a book that not one jot or one tittle will be left unfulfilled. You can trust it.

Two verses that I always use when somebody expresses a need to come to know Jesus Christ:

1 John 5:11, 12

This is the record, [here it is—just like it's authoritative] God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

There's the division. You either have the Son and you have life

or you don't and you don't have life. That's the record. God said it, you believe it and it settles your eternal destiny at that moment to receive Christ.

The principle that I get out of this first phrase is:

One's attitude toward the Word determines your progress toward godliness.

I mean, if you've got a blasé attitude toward the Word of God and it's nothing but a bunch of men's writings that have been collected together and it is not in fact a divine revelation, authoritative rule for faith in practice then you're going to treat it that way. And your attitude toward the Word is going to determine your progress toward godliness.

Now I want to state another principle. The key to Satan's program of opposition toward you becoming godly is to destroy your confidence in the Word.

He's the wily one who in the garden said "Yeah hath God said." Casting doubt upon the Word in Eve's mind, finally leading to Eve's excuse for partaking the fruit and giving it to her husband.

If he can get you to doubt it, to deny it, to disobey it, to destroy it, he destroys you as well.

So we focus on how critical truth really is.

If I could put in the word that Paul wrote to Timothy, the words that are now being said to Titus, it would be Second Timothy chapter 4 and verse 2:

2 Timothy 4:2

preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and careful instruction.

Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

In essence he’s saying to Titus: “You’re going to get some flack. You’re going to get some opposition. And with that opposition, don’t quit. Just keep on when it’s convenient and when it’s inconvenient. Stay by the stuff.”

I’d hate to stand in the shoes of some of these guys who are casting doubt upon the Word of God.

Speak it with authority. Speak it with assurance. And speak it with accuracy.

Why? You’ll notice the last phrase in verse 8. The purpose is given:

“in order that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good works.”

Now you read that phrase and say “Yay, I see right there.”

You should perform “good works” and so many people get caught up in that. Finally you get them over the hurdle that their salvation isn’t by works but by receiving the gift of God’s grace through faith and then they turn around right in the Christian life and begin to perform for God and work-work-work.

The first assignment of the new believer is to focus your attention on the Book. Study it and let God do the work in you and through you. Let’s go back to the process:

FAITH to FOOD to FRUIT.

Your works will be authentic and genuine and it won’t be put on. It won’t be you trying to perform for God. It’s just the way you’re going to be as a result of the work that has been wrought in your life through an exposure to truth.

You begin to see your life really change and become enriched.

“Good works” are the normal result of taking in truth.

Or put it another way: Flowing out of my life will be evidences that I’m His child and that I’m feeding on His Word.

Good works are the fruit of a deepening relationship to the Lord.

Be careful for good works. Confidence in the Word as I study it, work through the principles, good works are going to result.

Now you'll notice he concludes that verse by saying:

“These things are good and profitable to men.”

So “these things are good and profitable.”

Have confidence in the Word. You stay in there even though they're opposed to it. Teach it. Preach it. In order that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good works, which are the result of their exposure to the truth that you teach.

When I was teaching at A&M yesterday afternoon and one of the students said “You know, this all sounds like a little statement that I've heard from some of these nutritionists.”

And I began to realize that I had read several articles too in *Runner's World* and one of the articles this last couple of months had to do with cancer and its relationship to nutrition. We got to visiting there for a little while on probing this whole thing. And the guy says “You are what you eat!”

I thought yay, that's really true. They're saying you reflect and there's a great association between cancer and nutrition. They're doing more and more research on it, coming up with more and more things. And of course they're mixing the running and the physical exercise and all that into it and

saying “You are what you eat.”

And I’m going to say that that’s true spiritually. You’re godly lifestyle is a reflection of your spiritual habit. If you’re feeding upon the Word of God, then the godly life is going to result and it’s going to be you, it’s going to be genuine, it’s going to be fruitful and it’s going to touch the lives of others. It’s not something you’re trying to do. It’s just a result of what you eat.

v. 9 But be avoiding foolish controversies and genealogies and contention and strife about the law (legal battles); for they are unprofitable and worthless.

“But”:

1. “be avoiding foolish controversies and”
2. “genealogies and”
3. “contention and”
4. “strife about the law (or legal battles); for they are unprofitable and worthless.”

You tie those two verses together, you’ve got the direct contrast.

You’ll notice these **FOUR ROCKS** in the path of the godly—

distractions from your goal of godliness.

First:

1. “be avoiding foolish controversy.”

I asked the students yesterday afternoon, I said “What would you like the most, spending an hour in the Word alone with the Lord or get into a good bull session over some controversial issue?” And every one of them said “Man, the bull session would be the greatest!”

And we like to be people and we like controversy and we like to talk and solve the sovereignty of God and the free will of man, and predestination and election and all these great doctrinal issues.

I mean that satisfies the ego and it meets a need. But that hour bit alone with the Lord, early in the morning when nobody knows anything about it but you and the Lord, and you're in the Book and you're reading and studying, you're praying. You're seeing God do a good work in your life and in your family and in your business.

We like the “foolish controversy” because it's out there where it happens. Well you never travel around in the teaching ministry like this but once you've got them coming to your class, man they got that great big old Bible, and it's so big, and they walk in and they got that set jaw. And they sit back there and they're taking notes like crazy on everything you

say. And as soon as you open up for questions, BAM! they got it boy, and they're out of the box. And you know where they're from, usually by the first statement they make. Because you can almost fit every cult or -ism or weird group into the kind of question that they ask. It just explodes like that because they'll always start in the same place.

The common denominator of almost all the cults and -isms in our country are centered on controversy. And they disrupt. Instead of bringing unity, they bring division and strife. And as a Christian you don't waste your time with all of that.

I've even found that true in witnessing. Boy if I run into a guy who's—I call him green fruit. I mean if I bump into him and he's not ripe, then leave him alone! That's no sin against you that he's green. Leave him alone.

But the last thing I always say to him—I got one of them in Tyler, too. I've been with him two Saturdays now and he's still green as a gourd and I've given him four books—even C.S. Lewis—and gave him *Basic Christianity* by Stott. And I've laid a couple of real heavies on him. And he's still reading but he's still not there. He's got some problem before he's going to make it. But I don't take that personal. I'm certainly not going to get into a controversy with him and waste his time and mine.

But I always tell him when I go out the door “I am praying that God's going to ripen you up.” That always gets them. Always gets them. And you'd be amazed at how many of them

have been back and how eventually it finally, it finally gets to them.

You avoid that “foolish controversy.” Don’t spend the time arguing that thing that’s unprofitable and not good for you as a believer. You waste so much time on it.

Number two, you’re also to be:

2. “avoiding...genealogies.”

Now I got to make a little definition here so that you understand what the deal was in those days.

Many of these Jewish believers thought they had the inside tract because of their association.

Paul in Philippians chapter 3 gives you the greatest illustration out of it. He says “Well I’m a Hebrew of the Hebrews. I was born to full-blooded Jews on both sides. I was of the tribe of Benjamin. I was circumcised the eighth day. Man, I was a Pharisee. That’s a select brotherhood. With regard to the Law, blameless. Zeal, persecuting the church.” (Phil. 3:5-6)

But then he just—it’s like they’re saying: “Wow! We’ve got to listen to this guy!”

And in the next phrase—oh I just love it—he says: “But for all these things I counted them loss for Christ. That I might gain

Christ and be found in Him. That I might know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings.” (Phil. 3:8-10)

He just puts all of these advantages up here—all this genealogical table—and then he just throws it all away and says “I counted all that with garbage, count that all but lost, excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

A lot of people today who are running around, who when you talk to them about their relationship to Christ they always come back with a genealogical table.

I had one guy I was talking to today, he said: “Well, I’ve always been a Christian. I was born in a Christian home.” Well are you really? And “I’m born in a Christian country. I’ve been to church ever since I was in the nursery.” And you kind of always question those things, whether they really have a personal relationship with Christ or not because they get very foggy at that point. And they don’t come across real clear and it makes you quite concerned to say the least—using the heritage and spending time on that rather than on relationship.

Third he uses the word:

3. “contention.”

This means you draw the sword. After the controversy, you’re going to have contention. There’s always more heat than there

is light. And you're going to have division. Like the Corinthians: "I'm of Paul! I'm of Apollos! I'm of Christ. We're the most spiritual of the group." And they're all segmented.

Usually the flesh gets involved in the controversy and it ends up in contention where you've got strife and division and all of that.

Now notice the fourth one:

4. "strife about the law (or legal battles)."

Now that my friends is the heart of the problem. Paul was hassled by those who constantly came after him saying that the grace of God is not enough but the Law has to be mixed into that.

Remember the apostle told us in chapter 2 that the grace of God trains us? That denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live sensibly and righteously and godly in this present hour. The same grace of God that brought me into the family is the grace of God that trains for godliness.

But you know what a lot of people do? And I'm sure there's none of you here. But a lot of people live by the Law until they recognize they can't perform it. And they finally come to Christ but then they turn around after they become Christians and they start living by the Law again.

Now God gave the Law for a very express purpose. It was not

for you to live by. God gave the Law to show you your need of a righteousness which is not your own.

When the Law does its job properly it convicts you of sin. You'll never hear a sermon on the Ten Commandments that will let you go away feeling guilty. Right? That's what you're supposed to feel. That's why the Law was given.

That every mouth will be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God. The Law was given for the express purpose to show you in your self-righteousness and all of your performance that you fall short of God's righteous standard. That all have sinned, and to show the glory of God.

It is to convict and condemn. The Law cannot give life except life in prison.

For instance, you can't go out here today and drive 70 miles down the freeway and have somebody pick you up and say "But I've been a law abiding citizen for 30 years! I ought to have some concessions." And all the time he's writing out the ticket.

Because all the Law knows to do is to condemn. It doesn't make any difference on your past practice or performance at all. God designed it for the purpose of driving us to Jesus Christ, who in turn meets our needs for the broken Law—which is sin.

I always tell about my experiences in Young Life back when I

was in seminary here in Dallas. We always used to use the Law one night in club, during the spring of the year, to convince the kids of their need of Christ. And you'd always get up in front of the club and you'd say "Well tonight's the test."

And they'd say "Oh a test. We just got through it. Well what's the test?"

Well there's going to be 10 questions on the test. This is God's test. Remember God doesn't grade on the curve.

James 2:10 says:

James 2:10

For whosoever shall keep the whole Law and yet offend in one point, you're guilty of it all.

You miss one you flunk! Man, they're scared to death. So we start through the Ten Commandments. And we give it again. "You broken any? You broken that?"

"I haven't committed adultery."

"Oh well, Jesus said if you looked on a woman to lust after her....strike that one."

"Thou shalt not kill."

"I haven't done it."

“Oh our Lord said if you got mad at your...”

“Well strike that. I hit my sister this morning for using my aftershave.”

And then, you’ve got them right in buck! So you say “what’s your score?”

Zip. I’m done.

I remember one time up at Frontier Ranch up in Buena Vista, Colorado we talked about the Law one night and the next day we went up on Silver Cliff, where you’re looking straight down around you. Hundreds and hundreds of feet into nothing and those kids are scared to death they were going to fall off there before they got it together with the Lord. That’s the Law doing what it’s supposed to do. It’s supposed to show you that God is a just God and that He means business. And the Law drives us to Christ but it has nothing to do with your godly life.

So let me say that one more time. The Law has nothing to do with your godly life. What you’re doing is taking the Law out of intended function to be a school master to drive you to Christ and you’re bringing it over into the Christian life and you’re trying to perform it. And that won’t work.

Now many really get fussed up with me about the charismatic movement—the fact that I don’t speak in tongues.

Well I simply tell my charismatic friends my whole problem is you're taking a spiritual gift and you're using it for your own personal benefit and a spiritual gift was always given to minister to the needs of the body. It's to edify and build up other Christians.

If I have a gift of teaching, then you ought to go away edified and taught. I should minister to your needs. The gift always points out. But invariably it's always pointing in. It makes me a witness better. It makes me pray better. It makes me a better Christian.

You have just taken a valid spiritual gift and you have turned it from its intended use out here in ministry and you've made it focus within here to prove validity for it.

Now I just, you know, as a student of the Word I can't go along when we take something out of a contented purpose—although it sounds good and it looks good and it might help you and be meaningful. Friend, it doesn't fit! That is not the intended purpose that God had for that function originally.

Now there are four things here:

1. avoid the “controversy,”
2. avoid the “genealogies,”
3. avoid the “contention”—of drawing swords, and

4. avoid the “strife about the law” because it’s going to bring doubt, it’s going to divide and it’s going to destroy.

You’ll notice Philips translates that last phrase: “They settle nothing and they lead to nowhere.”

It’s of no benefit. We’ve already learned back in study number 3 that those who taught error upset whole families. And hurt deeply teaching those things which they taught for the sake of dishonest gain.

Verse 10.

v.10 Be rejecting a factious (divisive) man after a first and second warning,

“Be rejecting a factious (divisive) man after a first and second warning,”

Now you look at that and say “Oh man, I would never do that.”

As soon as you go and talk to somebody else, they’re going to say “Well you’re self-righteous. You’ve got some of the same things in your life.”

Now it’s all in how you do it. We’ve got a responsibility to our brothers and sisters in the family to be intimately involved in their lives. And when such is the case, on the basis of the

Word of God, we can go to them and deal with those problems.

Third John verse 9 is a great illustration of that:

3 John 9

Diotrophes who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us, not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers.

And I put Matthew 18 there. This is Jesus speaking—verses 15-17:

Matthew 18:15-17

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault between the two of you, if he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen take one of the two others along so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen then tell it to the church, and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

We've got a responsibility as brothers and sisters in the family that when these things are true, that there is careful confrontation in love and compassion. Not to judge but to share the disobedience that it might be dealt with in an effective manner.

I always go back to a situation I had a number of years ago where a good friend of mine was involved in a serious affair. And when I asked permission to share this information with the pastor of the church, since the fellow was in the place of leadership, the pastor looked at me and says “When you find a perfect elder, call me.”

That's too often the attitude and I think sometimes it's because of the secret sin in the lives of those who are in places of strategic leadership that we reap what we've sown.

Joshua at Ai, just because there's a few articles from city of Jericho in the floor of the tent, loses a great victory and many lives are lost.

Ananias and Sapphira who lie in Acts chapter 5, both lose their lives because they are dishonest and they're not living ethically and morally by speaking the truth.

It's almost like at the beginning of the nation Israel going into the land, God gives us the experience of Achan in Joshua chapter 6. And at the birthday of the church he gives us Ananias and Sapphira at both of these places to tell us that God means business, for us to go talk privately about it—bring somebody else and then deal with it in discipline in the church body.

Verse 11.

v.11 knowing that such a man is perverted (twisted, turned inside out) and is sinning, being self-condemned.

“knowing that such a man is perverted (or twisted, turned inside out) and is sinning, being self-condemned.”

Don't confuse me with the fact. My mind's already made up. I'm not going to listen to you.

What do you do as a godly person when somebody comes to you and they want to talk to you about criticism? They want to be constructive, they want to help you?

You manifest your godliness by your desire for unity. You're approachable and sensitive spirit to the criticisms that are given. And the desire above everything else for the unity of the body.

Last week on Thursday I was with OneMain Place for the noontime class. There's a very dear lady in that class that makes it possible for us to have that town meeting hall whenever we want to have it. One of our first classes about five or six years ago, she wrote all the offices in the bank and told them that at 12:30 on Thursday we'd always be meeting down there. And she invited them all to come. And many of them have been there.

Sometime you ought to drop in on that class. That's Pearl's very favorite—12:29 nobody there—12:59 they've all gone. But

in between there've been a bunch that come of all different backgrounds.

This lady came up to me and she says "Don, I watched a television show the other night and I've got some criticisms that I'd really like to share with you."

She's been on television nationally for 15 years. As a sweet Christian lady she's got some real valuable insight and help. I would really miss a great opportunity to have somebody minister to me starting out in something like this that I don't know anything about. And she's going to have some tremendous expertise and help.

And as believers there needs to be more of this in your godly life. Instead of having to be confronted like this and to turn away and bring about division, the godly life ought to manifest a spirit of approachableness, of sensitivity for unity to result from it.

What are the lessons? I got six.

Lesson #1: The Word of God is trustworthy. You can have confidence in it.

The Word of God is trustworthy. You can have confidence in it.

Lesson #2: Rightly relating to truth after coming to faith produces the good works.

Rightly relating to truth after you come to faith produces the good works.

Lesson #3: Avoid controversy and contention because they are unprofitable and worthless.

Avoid controversy and contention because they are unprofitable and worthless.

Lesson #4: When you are standing on the truth of the Word of God, you can reject the divisive person.

When you're standing on the truth of the Word of God, you can reject the divisive person.

Lesson #5: One's attitude toward the Word determines your progress toward godliness.

One's attitude toward the Word determines your progress toward godliness.

Lesson #6: The Law has nothing to do with godliness.

The Law has nothing to do with godliness.

It ceased in its function when it drove you in brokenness and repentance to the Cross of Calvary. It brought you to God's answer for your broken Law. It's done its job.

The Law has nothing to do with godliness.

Dr. Charles Ryrie from Dallas Seminary has written an excellent work called *Balancing the Christian Life*. As alumni we received a little supplement here called *Spiritual Balance*. It's an excellent tract of about 10 or 15 pages. I was reading it on the plane going out to Midland on Monday.

When I summarize this study with a statement that he makes as he concludes his writings:

This is the road of spiritual life—a dedicated life that is disciplined, dependent and developing.

I love that.

“This is the road of a spiritual life—a dedicated life that is disciplined, dependent and developing.”

Let me see if I can put that another way. It's a:

1. DEDICATED life in that you made a decision to make Him Lord.

And like Paul, you counted everything but loss.

Romans 12:1—as an act of intelligent worship:

Romans 12:1

hath presented your body a living sacrifice, wholly

acceptable unto Him.

It is a dedicated life. You make a dedication of Him being Lord.

But it is a:

2. DISCIPLINED life.

1 Corinthians 9:27

I treat my body roughly and I make it serve me, lest when I preach to others I myself might be disqualified.

We've seen the word disciplined over and over and over in these chapters.

Third it is a:

3. DEPENDENT life. You can't do it on your own.

Galatians 5:16, 17

Walk by means of the spirit and you will not fulfil the desires of the flesh.

And it is a:

4. DEVELOPING life.

2 Peter 3:18

We're growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

I love that.

Every day is a growing dimension to my spiritual life as I walk with God.

Philippians 3—I had so much fun. There's a young couple that are in the Gainesville class that I've just grown to love. They've just gotten so excited about the study of the Word. And he and his son both just love to run so I've been meeting them at six o'clock on Tuesday morning and do a little running. We were running yesterday morning, it was kind of dark out there, and the boy kept saying "How many laps have we run"

And I said "Well that's not the issue. We're going to run for a little while longer."

And then pretty soon he said it again.

I said "It's time for me to give you a verse of scripture. It's the runner's verse, its Philippians 3:12:

Philippians 3:12

Forgetting those things which are behind, we press

toward those things which are in front.

I'll tell you when we're going to get through. And I thought of that about the developing Christian life.

“Forgetting those things which are behind, we press toward those things which are in front.” (Phil. 3:12)

You know I've had one of the most precious experiences of all of my ministry today.

I'd gotten a telephone call last week from a fellow who wanted to meet with me. And I didn't put the face and the name together until I met him for lunch after my noontime class.

When we got together he said “I don't have any peace but I've been in the church all these years.” He said “I am really concerned about it because I'm getting older.”

And as we began to talk I realized he'd been very successful. He'd raised his kids and he had been very successful businesswise. He had everything that anybody could ever want. And yet he had no peace.

I pursued his physical life, his stress to see if that peace was due to the fact that he was physically exhausted. And I came up with a negative in all of those.

And I said to him “Could it be that you're awfully religious but you don't have relationship with Christ?”

And I said “Do you know the Word says that Jesus is standing at the door and knocking, wanting to come in? Do you really know Christ?”

He says “Well, when you put it that way, I don’t know.” He says “I’ve always been a Christian. I’ve always been religious.”

And then he made one of the most profound observations. You know how sometimes a guy, when you hit him with a question, he’ll just come up with the perfect statement?

He says “Perhaps I’ve been so busy being religious, I haven’t had time to hear Him knock.”

And I thought, hey man, you have hit it.

When we finished lunch he said “I would receive Christ right now if somebody would tell me how.”

I said “Buddy, where’s your office?”

He says “I got an appointment at three but we’ve got time if you’ll hurry.”

And I said “Let’s go!”

You know, when I drove into the parking lot of the company where he is, I thought I recognized it. And when I got upstairs to the top of the stairs a guy with a big smile on his face says

“I’m so-and-so” and he says “Do you remember last November?”

And I said “Do I remember last November?” I said “I’ve lost track of you since then.”

Twenty-six year old young man, been married twice, graduate of Texas Tech, \$10,000 in debt, ready to commit suicide. In the parking lot of the first garage over there, he’d received Jesus Christ as Savior.

He says “I got to tell you!” He says “I’m engaged to one of the sweetest girls! She’s the daughter of an ordained minister and I’ve got the neatest job and I got the \$10,000 debt taken care of and it’s great! And I’m going to such-and-such a church.”

And I was excited about the church too! And I said “Hey man, it’s neat of you finally to catch me up on this.”

He works for the guy I was getting ready to talk to. So I walked down the hall and there in one of the most beautiful experiences, I shared the Word of God. Now he could bow his head and invite Jesus Christ into his life.

He says “This is hard.” He says “I’m expecting some goosebumpy feeling.” He says “I want to have some kind of an emotional deal.”

I said “That’s not what it is. God said it. If you’ll put your faith in the fact, we’ll worry about the feelings later. Whether you

have them or you don't have them, doesn't make any difference. It certainly doesn't change the fact now but it's a fact that you put your faith in the fact."

When he prayed to invite Christ into his life I said "Did He come in? Two thirty, February 20, 1980 you were born again by the Spirit into God's family. Here sign this and I'll sign as a witness."

He says "Can I have that?" I said "Sure."

We walked out of that office together as brother. You know, and I firmly believe that I leave behind the Word of God in my classes and I'm not going to hassle you or bug you but I'll sure come to your office. I'll sure meet you where you are, in your home, to share the person of Jesus Christ with you if you've got questions.

Maybe just maybe you're sitting in this class and you've been so religious you've forgot to listen for His knock. And right now He's knocking wanting to come into your life. And you know you don't have any peace. You're just like that guy this afternoon who now has peace because he's been made right through the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, we realize that we can cloud the issue so much and we've got to come back to the decision that we each must make. To that very religious man Nicodemus You said "you must be born again." It's a divine imperative. And I pray right now that Your Holy Spirit might speak to those who are here

who because of pride and ego and self-satisfaction have yet to allow that to be stripped away to see their own barrenness and poverty-stricken spiritual experience. To be brought to the foot of the Cross, there to receive Christ as Savior. To experience a spiritual birthday, that they can walk away knowing that now they are part of your family. They can always go back to that date. Lord I pray as Christians that we'd learn well the lesson tonight to put confidence in Your Word, using it properly and correctly. Knowing that when we abide by its principles and use it the way it was designed, that it in fact changes our lives. And we pray that more and more of that might be going on as we rightly relate ourselves to divine truth. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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**A Practical Study of TITUS:
Growth Toward Godliness**

“Beginning to Look More Like Jesus”

STUDY NUMBER SEVEN – THE PROOF OF GODLINESS – TITUS 3:8-11

NOTES

v. 8 Trustworthy is the word, and concerning these things I am desiring you to be speaking confidently, in order that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good works. These things are good and profitable to men.

v. 9 But be avoiding foolish controversies and genealogies and contention and strife about the law (legal battles); for they are unprofitable and worthless.

v.10 Be rejecting a factious (divisive) man after a first and second warning,

v.11 knowing that such a man is perverted (twisted, turned inside out) and is sinning, being self-condemned.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Titus 3:8-11 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What does Paul want Titus to be speaking about, according to verse 8?

3. Why should the godly man be “careful to engage in good works,” according to verse 8?

4. What four things does Paul command Titus to “be avoiding” in verse 9?

5. For what reason is he to “be avoiding” these things, according to verse 9?

6. How is a “divisive man” to be handled, according to verse 10?

7. Read the epistle of 3 John and describe the “divisive man” in that passage.

8. How is the “divisive man” described in verse 11?

9. Which verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The Word of God is trustworthy, and you can have confidence in it.

LESSON #2: Rightly relating to truth after coming to faith, produces good works.

LESSON #3: Avoid controversy and contention, because they are unprofitable and worthless.

LESSON #4: When you are standing on the truth of the Word of God, you can reject the divisive man.

LESSON #5: One's attitude toward the Word determines progress toward godliness.

LESSON #6: Law has nothing to do with godliness.

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