

“Three Marks of a Healthy Church” – Titus 3:8-11

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[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions, please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, www.welovethegospel.com.]

Take a Bible and meet me in Titus 3...

In his classic nineteenth-century pastoral reflections, Charles Spurgeon brought to life a memorable, down-to-earth character named John Ploughman. One of Ploughman’s finest pieces of wisdom for anyone attempting to do meaningful work is a simple warning: “Never stop a plough to catch a mouse.” He paints the humorous and absurd picture of a team of horses, a grown man, and a young boy coming to a complete, dead standstill in the middle of a massive field—leaving a great work undone—all for the sake of chasing after a tiny, insignificant rodent. Tragically, as Spurgeon notes, churches and whole bodies of Christian people frequently go mouse-hunting. It’s profoundly easy for a congregation to become completely distracted by secondary matters. As John Ploughman’s minister confirms during one of their chats:

“A society of good Christian people will split into pieces over a petty quarrel, or a mere matter of opinion, while all around them the masses are perishing for want of the gospel. A miserable little mouse, which no cat would ever hunt, takes them off from their Lord’s work. Again, intelligent men will spend months of time and heaps of money in inventing and publishing mere speculations, while the great field of the world lies unploughed. They seem to care nothing how many may perish so long as they can ride their hobbies...As for you and me, John, let us kill a mouse when it nibbles our bread, but let us not spend our lives over it. What can be done by a mousetrap or a cat should not occupy all our thoughts.”¹

That’s a good word. But it highlights the unfortunate reality that many local churches are torn to pieces, fractured over petty human opinions, stylistic preferences, and speculative semantic debates, while all around them a perishing world starves for a lack of the life-giving Gospel.

Staying focused requires a ferocious, intentional discipline because there is nothing quite like “doing church” to accidentally distract us from our core message and mission. As the Apostle Paul brings his short, intense letter to Titus to a close, he is consumed by this exact concern. He knows the fledgling congregations scattered across the island of Crete are operating in a highly toxic, immoral cultural environment, while simultaneously facing legalistic, speculative false teachers corrupting the flock from within. And he knows that if these churches lose their focus, they lose their public witness.

Last Sunday, we stood on the theological summit of this letter in Titus 3:4-7, marveling at one of the most stunning and concise summaries of salvation in the entire New Testament. But Paul doesn’t leave that glorious doctrinal sentence hanging in midair. In our passage this morning, Paul transitions seamlessly from the vertical grace we have received to the horizontal life we are to live in the local church. He sets out to answer the question, “What are we to ‘do’ with this wonderful Gospel summary?”²

So let’s do the most important thing, which is to look at the text, and see exactly how Paul answers that question. If you are able, I invite you to stand once more in recognition of the authority of God’s Word in our lives. Follow along as I read, beginning in verse 8, where we left off last week...

“The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. ⁹ But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they

are unprofitable and worthless. ¹⁰ As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.” (Titus 3:8-11)

This is God’s Word. You may be seated...

The big idea of this text is simple: A church transformed by grace does not waste its time on trivial arguments; it anchors its heart in what Jesus did on the cross and walks out the doors determined to make His love visible. To help us maintain this vital clarity, Paul outlines three distinct marks of a focused, Gospel-centered, healthy church. The first of these marks is highlighted in verse 8...

A Healthy Church Insists upon the Core (8)

If a local church is going to maintain an unwavering focus before a watching, skeptical world, it must first resolve to build its entire life upon a singular, non-negotiable foundation—Christ, and Him crucified. Paul opens verse 8 with an authoritative stamp of certainty: “*The saying is trustworthy.*” Now, if you look across the Pastoral Epistles (i.e., 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus), you will find this formula, this statement, used exactly five times,³ and it functions to emphasize the importance of something Paul just said or is about to say. In this case, the scholarly consensus is that it refers backward.⁴ Paul is locking his sights on the spectacular theological heights we explored last Sunday in verses 4 through 7. He’s referring back to “the essential ingredients of our salvation”⁵—the historical epiphany of God’s kindness, the bathing of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the ongoing work of sanctification, the unmerited justification through Jesus Christ, and our secured adoption as heirs of eternal glory. Paul looks back at that magnificent, cosmic reality and says, “*the saying is trustworthy,*” which is to say, it’s reliable, dependable, and thoroughly “deserving of your confidence.”⁶

And because of this, Paul places a heavy mandate upon Titus (and, by extension, church leadership more generally) when he says next, “*I want you to insist on these things*” (3:8). The verb he uses here is a very forceful word that conveys the idea of speaking with absolute certainty and confidence. Paul only uses the word on one other occasion, in 1 Timothy 1:7, where he uses it to condemn false teachers who “*make confident assertions*” about their distorted legalistic views. Their insistence was a problem because their teaching was false.

But Titus’ message—the Gospel—is “*trustworthy.*” He *should* confidently insist upon it. Orthodox, Gospel-preaching shepherds must not be tentative, timid, or apologetic about the theological core of the Christian faith. This is a direct apostolic directive. Titus “was not to be hesitant, indecisive, or vacillating but rather bold and intense, speaking and acting with the firm conviction that he was obediently fulfilling his divinely appointed ministry.”⁷ We’re not permitted to soft-pedal the doctrines of grace, nor are we allowed to treat the cross as a piece of casual, introductory trivia. The pulpit is called to a relentless, repetitive, and unshakeable insistence on the truth of salvation.

But why? Why does Paul demand such a high level of vocal intensity regarding such doctrine? Well, he provides one specific cause-and-effect rationale in the next phrase: “*so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works*” (Titus 3:8). This is the real heartbeat of the entire book of Titus. Paul is showing us that God’s grace is the engine that changes how we live on the ground. Notice how carefully the Bible keeps things in order though. We do not do good things to buy our way into heaven. Christians do good things because God has already saved them by His mercy. Think of it like a financial investment: “If faith was spiritual capital [God deposits], then good works were the spiritual return on that investment.”⁸ Of course, the only faith we have to invest is that which was freely imparted to us by God’s grace, but you get the idea. If we want to see that ROI, the fruit of a changed life, then the church must preach the root of the Gospel that produces it. We must go on insisting upon these things.

Living this out requires us to use our minds and plan ahead. Paul uses a rare Greek word here, translated “*be careful to.*” This is the only occurrence of the word in the entire New Testament. It means to “be mentally intent on, concentrate on,”⁹ or “to give deep and sustained thought to something.”¹⁰ This completely destroys the idea that Christians can just drift into spiritual maturity by accident. Good works do not automatically happen just because you sit in a sanctuary once a week and feel a warm religious emotion. Loving your neighbor requires thought, strategy, and planning. As a church family, we have to look at our lives, our money, and our schedules, and intentionally design them so we can help others and meet “*cases of urgent need*” (cf. 3:14).

Paul finishes the verse by telling us why a life of good works matters so much: “*These things are excellent and profitable for people*” (3:8). The word “*profitable*” means something is genuinely helpful, useful, and good for the community. This truth challenges everything our culture tells us about success. If you’re a student in college or a young professional trying to build a career, the world tells you that your life is all about making money, getting promoted, and serving yourself. But the Gospel gives you a completely new identity. Your job, your classes, and your daily interactions with neighbors are not just tools to get rich. They are fields of service that God chose for you, where you can do “*excellent and profitable*” things that show the beauty of Jesus to people around you.

When God’s grace really changes your heart, it changes how you act every single day. For older adults among us, this text is a powerful warning against the temptation to coast through a comfortable, self-focused retirement. The Holy Spirit, who inspired this text, is calling you to look at your years of life experience, your resources, and your free time, and to intentionally plan how you will use them to help people who are hurting or lonely, to seek first the kingdom. Every quiet act of generosity, every hour spent encouraging a young believer, and every hands-on effort to help someone in need matters immensely. These good works are beautiful because they “adorn the Gospel and thus point people to the truth.”¹¹

But Paul is deeply realistic. He knows that the path of Gospel-centered fruitfulness is constantly threatened by spiritual misdirection. He understands that the enemy does not always attack the church by sending flagrant immorality through the front doors. Quite often, he destroys her witness from within by quietly shifting her focus away from the majesty of the Gospel and toward the quicksand of theological triviality. Therefore, Paul transitions, and this leads us to consider next that...

A Healthy Church Avoids the Counterfeits (9)

If the first mark of healthy churches is an unyielding insistence on the core message of God’s grace, the second mark is a collective, vigilant refusal to be sidetracked by spiritual counterfeits. Look again at verse 9. Paul shifts his tone from a passionate charge to a sharp warning: “*But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.*” Notice the sharp, deliberate contrast Paul sets up here. In verse 8, he tells us that preaching the Gospel and living out good works are “*excellent and profitable for people.*” But here, he describes the opposite, warning that certain intellectual preoccupations are “*unprofitable and worthless.*”

The enemy of the church rarely walks through the front doors waving a flag that says, “Heresy.” Instead, he sneaks in through the side doors, pulling in a cart full of distractions. He loves nothing more than to get a church so consumed by peripheral matters that we lose sight of the cross. Paul categorizes these distractions into four distinct counterfeits, likely stemming from Hellenistic Jewish influence that blended the Gospel with speculative traditions.¹² Nevertheless, if we are honest, these types of distractions are just as alive in churches today as they were in first-century Crete.

First, he mentions “*foolish controversies*” (3:9).¹³ These are the speculative, endless debates that have absolutely no bearing on our salvation and our sanctification. He’s not discouraging honest inquiries or engaging with controversial matters, both of which are necessary for sustained Christian growth. But not all

controversies or speculations are created equal. Some are “*foolish*,” not worthy of our prolonged attention. In the ancient world, people loved to debate philosophy and hidden meanings. Today, we often tempted to do the same thing online or in small groups or Sunday schools. These are the theological rabbit holes that promise deep intellect but deliver empty souls. It is the obsessive focus on microscopic details of the end times, or trying to unpack things God has intentionally left a mystery in His Word. When a church falls in love with controversies, it trades the meat of the Gospel for the junk food of curiosity. We become an echo chamber of opinions rather than a beacon of truth.

Second, Paul warns against “*genealogies*.” Some argue that this refers to popular debates at the time about the descent of the Messiah or to various extrabiblical myths associated with figures in Jewish history. If this is the case, then Paul would have likely considered these preoccupations as illustrations of the “*foolish controversies*” that distract us. He gave a similar warning to the Ephesians when he said that believers should not “*devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies*” since they “*promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God’s work*” (1 Tim 1:4, NIV; cf. 2 Tim 2:14-17). Others have argued that these genealogy discussions related more to personal self-promotion. The suggestion is that some teachers were obsessed with tracking physical lineages, trying to prove they were spiritually superior because of who their ancestors were. They built a hierarchy of holiness based on pedigree. While we might not argue about physical genealogies today, we absolutely fall prey to the spirit behind them. We create our own spiritual genealogies. We brag about our heritage: “I’ve been at this church for my whole life,” or “I was baptized by this famous pastor,” or whatever. We use our background as a badge of self-righteousness. But the Gospel levels the playing field. Your spiritual pedigree doesn’t make you a millimeter closer to God than the believer who shares none of your claims to fame.

Third, Paul warns against “*dissensions*,” which simply means division or discord. This is what happens when “*foolish controversies*” and prideful “*genealogies*” are allowed to simmer. They boil over into factions. People begin to pick sides. In the church, dissension usually happens when we elevate personal preferences to the status of divine commands. We divide over music styles, over political opinions, over carpet colors, or over leadership personalities. When dissension takes root, the church stops looking like a family and starts looking like a political convention, where everyone is trying to lobby for their special interest group.

Finally, Paul highlights “*quarrels about the law*.” For the early church, this looked like legalistic teachers trying to bind Gentile believers to Jewish ceremonial laws. They were adding human rules to God’s grace. In our context, this is the counterfeit of legalism. It is the subtle shift from “Look what Jesus did for me” to “Look at what I am doing for God.” It happens when we create unwritten rulebooks for what a “good Christian” must look like—how they dress, what media they consume, or how they vote—and then we judge everyone else by our standard. Legalism always breeds quarrels because it is fueled by a desire to perform and compare.

Look at how Paul describes all four of these counterfeits at the end of the verse. He doesn’t just say they are annoying. He says they are “*unprofitable and worthless*.” Think about that phrase. You can spend years studying, debating, and fighting over these things, and at the end of your life, the net return on your investment will be zero. They carry no weight in eternity. They don’t save a single lost soul, they don’t heal a broken marriage, and they don’t comfort a grieving heart. They are spiritual smoke—occupying space and blinding our vision, but leaving nothing of substance behind.

So what is the pastoral command here? Paul doesn’t say “engage them and try to win the argument.” He says, “*avoid*” them. The Greek word means to turn yourself around, to actively step away, to create distance. Do not feed the beast of distraction. Church, we must realize that our time, our energy, and our emotional bandwidth are limited resources. Every ounce of energy we spend fighting over trivial matters is an ounce of energy we cannot spend on loving our neighbor, feeding the poor, instructing our children, and proclaiming the Gospel to a world that is dying without it. If the devil cannot make a church bad, he will settle for making a church busy with the wrong things. He wants us to engage in “*foolish controversies*,” but Paul is telling us to avoid them like

“quicksand.” Why? Because Paul knows that if we step into them, our “energy and attention will be absorbed” and you will have a “very difficult time getting out.”¹⁴

We avoid these counterfeits not by becoming passive, but by becoming fiercely protective of our focus. When a controversy arises, we must ask ourselves, “Does this clarify the work of Jesus, or does it just puff up my knowledge? Does this unite the body of Christ, or does it build a wall by elevating something that is not biblically core to core status?” A Gospel-centered church refuses to let the majors be replaced by the minors. We anchor our minds and our conversations so deeply in the finished work of Jesus Christ that when the counterfeits come knocking, we simply don’t have the time or the appetite for them. We have tasted the bread of life, and we refuse to settle for the husks of worthless debate.

But here’s the rub: It’s one thing to deal with foolish *ideas*, but it is a much heavier task when those ideas are wrapped in a person. It is easy to say, “Avoid the arguments,” but what do we do when an individual refuses to stop arguing? How does a Gospel-centered church protect itself when someone isn’t just flirting with spiritual counterfeits, but actively trying to sell them to the rest of the flock? Well, Paul doesn’t leave Titus hanging. He moves directly from the *problems* we must avoid to the *people* we must address. If we are going to protect the purity and unity of the church, we have to move from passive avoidance to active, courageous confrontation. This brings us to the third and final mark, namely...

A Healthy Church Confronts the Contentious (10-11)

Look again at verses 10 and 11. Paul writes,

“As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.” (Titus 3:10-11)

Let’s be honest: these are comforting verses until we actually have to live them out. We live in a culture that treats tolerance as the highest virtue and views any kind of confrontation as unloving. But the Bible operates on a completely different frequency. In the economy of God’s grace, true love protects the family. If a shepherd sees a wolf coming toward the sheep, he confronts it.

Paul specifically targets the contentious person, the one “*who stirs up division*.” This translates the Greek word *hairesitikos*, from which we get our English word “heretic.” But in the first-century context, it didn’t just mean someone who had bad theology. It meant someone who was fundamentally factious.¹⁵ It describes a person who creates a sect, a clique, or a party dynamic within the church. This is the person who uses their opinions to build a personal following, driving a wedge between believers. They are not content to hold a peripheral view quietly. They want to recruit others to their side, splitting the body of Christ.

How do we deal with such people? Well, Paul outlines a process of church discipline that is patterned after Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 18. Notice the precise, patient, yet firm protocol Paul outlines for dealing with a divisive person. He says to warn them “*once and then twice*.” This tells us that a church does not have a zero-tolerance, “one strike and you’re out” policy. Church discipline is meant to be redemptive. It’s actually meant to be practiced in love. Dietrich Bonhoeffer noted this in his famous book, *Life Together*, where he wrote:

“Nothing can be more cruel than that leniency which abandons others to sin. Nothing can be more compassionate than that severe reprimand which calls another Christian in one’s community back from the path of sin.”¹⁶

Amen. We are a people of grace. Our initial response to division, then, is not excommunication. It’s always an attempt at restoration. When someone begins to stir up trouble, we go to them. We pull them aside in love. We say, “Brother/sister, this issue you are pushing is causing friction. It’s drawing eyes off of Jesus and onto

unprofitable debate. For the sake of the peace of this church, please let it go.” If they don’t listen, we go back a second time, perhaps bringing a leader, escalating the seriousness of the warning, but maintaining a spirit of gentleness. We give them room to repent. We give them space to catch themselves.

But look at what happens if they refuse both warnings. Paul says, “*have nothing more to do with him.*” Other translations say, “*reject*” him (e.g., NASB; KJV; CSB). This is the painful reality of church discipline sometimes. If a person values their own opinion more than the unity of Christ’s body, they forfeit their place in the fellowship of that body.

This sounds incredibly harsh to modern ears,¹⁷ I know, but look at how Paul justifies this boundary in verse 11: “*knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.*” The word “*warped*” carries the idea of something being turned inside out or twisted out of shape. A divisive person’s spiritual compass has flipped. Their stubbornness proves that their problem isn’t a lack of information, but a condition of the heart. By choosing their division over the body of Christ, they have already spoken a verdict on themselves. They have chosen to cast themselves out.

Why is Paul so incredibly strict here? Why such a drastic measure over someone stirring up arguments? Because the unity of the church is a Gospel issue. Think about Jesus’ prayer in the Upper Room right before He went to the cross. He didn’t pray that His church would be wealthy, or politically powerful, or culturally elite. He prayed, “*that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you...so that the world may believe that you have sent me*” (John 17:21). Our unity as a church, in other words, is a visual billboard of the Gospel to a broken world. When a world full of fractured families, political warfare, and racial hostility looks at the local church, they are supposed to see a supernatural unity that cannot be explained by human sociology. They are supposed to see people who are completely different from one another loving each other deeply because of Jesus.

When someone walks into a church and starts chopping up that unity for the sake of their own ego or their favorite theological, non-core, hobby horse, they are vandalizing the artwork of God. They are sabotaging the very witness of the Gospel. Thus, confronting the contentious is never about—or at least should never be about—leaders flexing their authority or protecting their own power. It is about protecting the flock that Jesus purchased with His own blood. It is an act of deep pastoral love for the weak, the vulnerable, and the young believers who could easily be swept away by toxic conflict.

C. S. Lewis wrote, in *Mere Christianity*,

“[The devil] always sends errors into the world in pairs—pairs of opposites. And he encourages us to spend a lot of time thinking which is worse. You see why, of course? He relies on your extra dislike of the one error to draw you into the opposite one.”¹⁸

That strikes me as a rather perceptive insight. The devil doesn’t particularly care which error you fall into, as long as you don’t walk the narrow path of truth.

In the church, for example, the devil loves to swing us between two extremes: a cold, rigid legalism that fights over everything, or a sloppy, spineless sentimentality that stands up for nothing. A healthy church rejects both. We refuse to be contentious, but we also refuse to tolerate the contentious. We treat the peace of this church as a sacred treasure. We hold the line, not with fists raised in anger, but with hearts broken by the necessity of the task, always praying that the boundaries we set might be the very tools God uses to bring a wandering brother or sister to genuine repentance.

So, church, as we look back across these verses in Titus 3, Paul has laid before us a vivid blueprint for a healthy church. It is a church that knows exactly what to fight for, what to ignore, and when to protect the flock.

- **We insist on the core:** the life-altering truth that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.
- **We avoid the counterfeits:** refusing to spend kingdom energy on trivial debates and empty distractions.
- **And we confront the contentious:** holding the line for supernatural unity, because the peace of Christ's body is too precious to sacrifice on the altar of human pride.

When you step back and look at these three marks, you realize they all point to the exact same reality. They are all designed to keep our eyes fixed on one specific place: the person and work of Jesus Christ. If we lose the core, we lose the heart of Christianity. If we embrace counterfeits, we lose our focus. If we tolerate division, we lose our witness. Every single instruction Paul gives to Titus is meant to anchor the church to the cross.

And that is exactly why it is so beautifully fitting that we get to transition from the preaching of the Word this morning straight to the Table of the Lord. Because the Lord's Supper is such a wonderful antidote to every single danger Paul warns against. Think about it. If you are tempted this morning to wander away from the core truths of the Gospel—if you have been operating as though you have to earn your way to God or if you feel like your failures have made you a spiritual outcast—look to this Table. Look at the bread and the cup. They remind us of the broken body and the shed blood of Jesus. They say to us, “Your performance didn't save you, and your performance cannot sustain you. It is finished.” Here at the Table, we reset our souls to the core message of the Gospel, the message of God's grace to us in the person and work of Christ.

If you have been caught up in counterfeits this week—if your heart has been weighed down by political anxieties, online arguments, legalistic comparisons, or foolish controversies—let this Table clear the smoke. When we hold these simple elements, all the loud noises of the world, by God's grace, can go quiet. The trivial things can melt away, and we are confronted with what actually matters for eternity: Jesus died, Jesus is risen, and Jesus is coming back!

And finally, if there is any fracturing in our unity—if you are holding a grudge, if you have been sowing seeds of discord, or if you have allowed bitterness to build a wall between you and another brother or sister—this Table can level the walls.

Look around the room. When we take communion, we do not take it in isolation. We eat of one bread, and we drink of one cup. The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians that because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body. At the foot of the cross, the ground is completely level. There are no hierarchies here. There are no political factions here. There are no cliques here. There is only a family of broken sinners who have been put back together by a magnificent Savior.

Before we take these elements together, I must remind you that this ordinance is for the believer, which is to say, for the person who has placed their faith in Jesus alone for their salvation, the person who has turned from their sin and self to Jesus because He alone can deliver. If that is you, regardless of whether you are a member of this local church, you are invited to share this meal because you are part of the body of Christ. But if you have not put your trust in Christ for this salvation, then I invite you to partake not in the bread and wine this morning, but in the One they signify—Jesus Christ. Use these moments to confess your sin and need to God, and call upon the name of Jesus to save you. He died on the Cross for your sins. He took your sin upon Himself and died the death you deserved to die so that you, through faith, could be forgiven of all your sin and given everlasting life with Him. He alone can save. And He saves all who trust in Him alone, not their own works. And He would save you today, if you would believe on Him.

But for those of you who know this and have experienced His saving grace, I want to invite you into a brief moment of quiet reflection and prayer. If you have wandered from the core, come back home this morning. If you have been chasing counterfeits, drop them at the feet of Jesus. And if you have been contentious, ask the Holy Spirit to give you a heart that pursues peace and protects the unity of the body.

Let's pray together as we prepare our hearts...

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Complete John Ploughman*, C. H. Spurgeon Classics (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2007), 214-216. Also referenced in Todd A. Wilson, *Zealous for Good Works: Mobilizing Your Church for the Good of Your Community* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2018), 97-98.

² Tim Chester, *Titus for You* (The Good Book Company, 2014), 103.

³ See also 1 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11. For a more detailed discussion on the expression, see G. W. Knight, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 80-111.

⁴ E.g., Daniel L. Akin, *Living Doctrine: The Book of Titus* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 60; Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, UBCS (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 206-207.

⁵ John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus*, BST (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 206.

⁶ Sam Storms, *2 Timothy & Titus: A 40-Day Bible Study* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2025), 190.

⁷ John MacArthur, *Titus*, MNTC (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 157.

⁸ David Murray, *Timothy and Titus" Stories of Fear and Courage*, StoryChanger Devotional (Wheaton: Crossway, 2024), 205.

⁹ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 551.

¹⁰ William Arndt et al., "φρονιζω" in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1066.

¹¹ John Piper, "Unprofitable Controversies and Those Who Cause Them: Titus 3:8-11, Part 2," accessed online at: https://youtu.be/5ItWwy72ZX4?si=JQg_G1dbSJWRlKdX.

¹² "Here is certain evidence, along with 1:10, that the errors in these churches stem basically from Hellenistic Judaism. More than reflecting a later phenomenon, this language indicates a much earlier period, when the distinctions between church and synagogue were not so fully defined. Apparently some Hellenistic Jews on Crete, who had 'accepted Christ,' were also promoting continuing connections with Judaism, especially in the form of speculative teaching and rigorous devotion to rules and regulations. Thus it is not only the theological aberrations (1:10-16) of the false teachers, but their unprofitable (the opposite of 'profitable' in v. 8) and useless behavior as well, that distresses Paul." Fee, 211.

¹³ The Greek word translated "foolish" is *mōros* (μωρός), which is where we derive the English adjective "moronic." John Calvin described such controversies as "whatever is pointless, trifling and irrelevant," and enjoyed by fools who desire to "be lauded for their subtle speculations." John Calvin, *Sermons on Titus*, trans. Robert White (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2015), 271.

¹⁴ Wilson, 103.

¹⁵ As Hierbert notes, in the first century the word described "a person who is quarrelsome and stirs up factions through erroneous opinions, a man who is determined to go his own way and so forms parties and factions" D. Edmond Hiebert, *Titus and Philemon* (Chicago: Moody, 185), 75.

¹⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together—Prayer Book of the Bible*, in Vol 5 of *Bonhoeffer Works*, ed. Geoffrey B. Kelley (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 105.

¹⁷ Victor Masters cautions, "Sentimentality is an enemy of church discipline. Sentimentality is the love of man divorced from love of truth....It cloaks a big lot of hypocrisy and moral decay." See Greg Wills, "Southern Baptists and Church Discipline," *SBJT* 4.4 (Winter 2000): 9-10.

¹⁸ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperOne, 1952), 186.