

12.06.2023

Titus – Making Things Right

Chapter 1 - (vs. 14-16)

Well, if you turn with me in your Bibles to Titus 1; we come to the end of this chapter and are looking into verse 15 and 16 tonight. In a way there's kind of a summary to these particular verses. My hope is that you'll see the wonderful truths that Paul is trying to convey, especially to Titus who has been sent to this island of Crete. In which there are a lot of things that are upside down. Not unusual, is it? We see a picture of chaos and disorder. In fact, the reason that we know there's disorder is the very reason that he sends him is to set things in order. So, we know that there's disorder and things are in disarray when he goes to this particular place.

When we consider the isle of Crete, I think oftentimes our thoughts are that these people are unlearned and they just don't know any better, but that is not the case. In fact, this is probably one of the oldest civilizations in the world. So, the Minoans for many years had built these large and magnificent palaces and edifices. There had been a lot of learning that had gone through this particular island. So, these are not ignorant people nor are they poor people. Though they seem to have a kind of pirate mentality when you look in verse 12, "One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.'" He goes on to say that "This testimony is true." Although they demonstrate certain qualities that would seem to convey that maybe they didn't know any better, once again, nothing could be further from the truth. One of the things that it demonstrates is that you can have a lot of money and you can have a lot of stuff, but that doesn't make you a better person. You can have a lot of education, but it doesn't make you smarter. So, as we're looking at this particular passage, we realize that we're dealing with people that really have a pride issue; because of that, there's a society that is very syncretistic. That is to say, there is a blending of all kinds of different faiths and beliefs.

In a way, we kind of have the book of Judges: "Every Man Did What Was Right In His Own Eyes," and because of that everybody is a self-proclaimed leader. If you want to be a leader, you just make your own little group and become your own little leader. For that very reason one of the things that Paul begins to talk about is that you need to see that there is a Divine order that God has established right from the very beginning. Of course, God, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone of the building and God set up the apostles which laid the foundation. As the apostles go on, they begin to reveal that they choose overseers for the churches. Then, the overseers in turn choose leadership within the church. In other words, there's an order to all of this, and it's a Divine order. God had ordained the church for this very purpose. Of course, if you would go to most of the Cretans, they would say, "I can do whatever

I want to do because I'm who I am." There were a lot of groups that were very esoteric in the sense that they perceived themselves as highly educated, very important, or very wealthy. So, they could just walk into a place and say, "I'm going to take charge." Well, that kind of mentality was happening within the church, and Paul was bringing it back to the fact that it's not about how much you have or how much you know, but it is about your character. So, as he begins to talk about choosing overseers, as you see from the list, all of those things are about character, right? It talks about being above reproach, if you look within the passage,

(Titus 1:7) "For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine..."

"Not to be drawn to wine" is actually what the phrase means.

"... not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain,

(Titus 1:8) but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled..."

Then, the most important part in verse 9,

"Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict."

So, it lays that sense of these are the kind of people that we're looking for rather than people that are just grabbing for honor.

One of the passages that we talked about last week is Hebrews 5:4. It deals with the fact that nobody should take honor to themselves. A lot of these people were self-made and there may have been success in other areas. So, they would just grab honor however they pleased. Paul makes it very clear to Titus that you can't let them do that. You need to appoint the men and look for these character traits in these individuals in order for us to build upon a firm foundation.

So, as we come down to verses 15 and 16, we almost hear a conclusive thing; in the sense of what we're looking for. I like the fact that it ultimately boils down to a very clear, simplistic truth. That is, there is such a thing as good and evil. There is such a thing as right and wrong. There is such a thing as pure and defiled. So, he's going to literally come down to these basic fundamentals as he comes to the end of this chapter. He begins to demonstrate to us how to keep things in the right perspective and why certain people aren't able to see that truth. There are some people that you can talk to all day long about the wonderful words of life, and they would just look at you and say, "Huh?" They just won't get it, and there's a reason why. One of the statements that Paul makes to the Corinthians is, "The god of this world has blinded the minds of those who are unbelieving." (2 Corinthians 4:4) It literally means they cannot see. Jesus will use the phrase, "Having ears but they can't hear". (Psalm 115:6)

When we come to this passage, we begin to realize that there is something within the heart of man that begins to either be drawn to truth, as John 3 will say, or repel. Why is it that people

don't gravitate towards Jesus? That doesn't make any sense. He's the Savior of the world. For God so loved you that He gave His only begotten Son. Why wouldn't you be drawn to that? According to John 3, it tells us that men love darkness rather than light and their deeds are evil. So, there is a reason.

If you look with me in 2 Corinthians 11; I've often reflected upon this phrase, if I can put it that way, that Paul begins to teach the Corinthians and he says, "I really long for you to believe in these things." You begin to feel his heart, especially in verse 2.

He starts off in verse 1, "You're going to have to bear with me on this." If you've ever shared your emotions with somebody, and you felt very passionate about it, you may have started off with, "You're going to have to bear with me in it. I feel very strongly about this." So, in a way, Paul is saying that in this passage.

In verse 3, he writes, "But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ."

It's not complicated. God loves you. Will you love Him back? It comes back to the simplicity of that. You go, "Well, I don't know. It's that whole knowledge thing." That's the serpent talking. On the island of Crete, you have so many different beliefs. In the day and age that we live in, you have your experts, psychologists, doctors, and theologians. How do I know that this is the right belief? People are going, "How do I know?" Listen, do you know what truth is? "Yes." Ok, then truth will lead you to the Savior. Those that are longing for truth will come to the light and that will be revealed.

Paul writes at the beginning of this in Titus 1, he says, "Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God..." This seems to convey that there are certain things that you're not going to understand unless God opens your eyes.

"... and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness."

Here again, I think people want to overcomplicate and the evil one wants to overcomplicate. "Oh no, it's very complicated." No, it's not complicated. What is truth? Well, truth is right and wrong. There is such a thing.

As Isaiah 5 says, they call good evil and evil good. Now, things are getting complicated because you've just turned everything upside down. According to Romans 2, God has literally put a conscience in our heart. So, we know what right and wrong is. Ok, we have the Ten Commandments, I get it, but does somebody really have to tell you, "Thou shalt not steal"? I know that they might have to tell you about stealing from somebody else, but if somebody stole from you then you would say, "That's wrong!" If somebody did something against you, whether it was in jealousy or coveting or all kinds of things as you go down the list, in your heart you would know that it's wrong. So, Paul writes, saying that you know what the truth is; "according to godliness." You know what that is. If in fact that's what you long for, you'll come to Christ. God is calling us to Himself.

As we come down to verse 15, we begin to deal with these clear and simple words “pure” and “defiled.” Antithetical to each other; purity and defilement. You couldn’t get more opposite than those particular words. He begins to demonstrate what the person that is seeking purity sees, and what the person who seeks defilement sees. Also, how they’re unable to come to grips with what is right. It’s not only going to convey to us the inability to see certain things, but it’s going to convey to us a sense of unproductivity in our lives. Here again, if we could put it into context, let’s say that you have all of the resources that money can buy. Let’s say that you have all of the knowledge and all of the wisdom that education could give you. Let’s say that you have a lot of money so that you can have the right house and car and you can even have all of your things in the garage in perfect bins and everything’s in order. Scripture begins to reveal to you that that’s not what keeps your house in order. I’ve seen a lot of people that perceive “If I just had this house...If I had this car...If I had this job...the planets align...if I get everything that I want...then my life is going to be smooth sailing.” God reminds us of that’s not what makes smooth sailing. It’s the presence of God. It’s not these things. You realize as well, as Hebrews 16 will convey, that these things can complicate your life. The parable of soils begins to reveal that you soon begin to get immersed in the wrong stuff, and it pulls you away from the Lord. Then you wake up one day, and you go, “Man, my life is a mess. I don’t even know how I got here. I did everything right that the world told me to do.” In this setting, you have everybody or “experts” telling you how to live your life. “I did this. I did this. I did this...” Then you say, “Why is my life still a mess?” It’s because you listened to the “experts.”

That’s why it will say in verse 10, “For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers”. What a great phrase that is. Paul will make mention of them in 1 Timothy 1:6, “For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion...” like empty talkers. Somehow, they can make it seem like it’s really important, and you think, “Wow, that’s deep.” No, it’s not. It’s just confusing and you can’t understand it. That’s why you think it’s deep.

Anyway, it says, “For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion,

(1 Timothy 1:7) wanting to be teachers of the Law...”

That’s the self-proclaimed authoritative figure. That’s why you can’t just let anybody jump in and take an office.

“Wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.”

“He seems to know what he’s talking about.” Yeah, he’s bluffing. He has no idea what he’s talking about. Why does Scripture say that? The reason Scripture says that is because they were talking about things that were philosophical and religious. Nevertheless, it never changed their lives. Paul writes about this to the Colossians, and he goes, “This self-made religion that man has made for himself doesn’t help anybody get better.” As Jesus will say, “You’ll know them by their fruits.” What’s happening? You get these psychologists that counsel people in their

marriages, and they've had five divorces. The point is that they don't know what they're talking about because they're not dealing with something that is actually real or that works; that is from God. So, Paul wants to make that distinction in a very simple way.

As you drop on down, we'll see it in the passage. In which, he begins to talk about purity. Now, he starts off this way in verse 15, "To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled."

So, you're going to see "defiled" there a couple of times and "pure" will be emphasized within that particular verse a number of times. The word that he uses, "*katharos*," for pure within the passage is a very broad term, but within the context; I oftentimes tell people that you might go to a concordance and look up a particular definition; it is important to understand that all of the definitions that are listed are not necessarily what that word is going to mean in that particular context. So, the translators will usually show you within the passage what that word is defined as. Once again, you might have several different definitions.

In this particular setting, you have to take the obvious picture of purity; which is really conveying the fact that you're dealing with something or somebody that is free from corrupt desires. The emphasis is going to be somebody that is free from that which is false and insincere. So, false or corrupt desires would be impurity. A false, insincere demeanor or a liar (hypocrisy would be another way of putting it) would be somebody with a two-faced demeanor or duplicitous in the way that he deals with people. So, that is an untrustworthy person; which is impurity. When we talk about purity, we talk about somebody that you can trust in; somebody that you know is not thinking about their own agenda while they're trying to help you. James will put it as you don't want to be double-minded. For instance, a husband that is going to be pure to his wife is somebody that has eyes for her only. That is how it is described in Scripture. It means that he's not looking at a whole bunch of other women. That would be impure, and it would not be focused; clearly double-minded. It clearly has that connotation. However, in the passage, he's going to be emphasizing more specifically another definition that would probably have its similitude in the Gospel of John. So, if I can show it to you, we'll turn to John 15, and you'll see this particular word being used in this context. I'm going to show you why I've chosen this definition to be more the emphasis; even though some of these other points are clearly understood within the text as well.

John 15 starts off this way as Jesus begins to share with His disciples, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser."

(John 15:2) "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit."

(John 15:3) You are already clean..."

There it is. That's the word. Pure would be the word. "You are already pure."

Now, within the passage, He's talking about a cleaning up of the tree and the vine. You have all of these branches going off in all kinds of other directions. They're really taking from the one branch that's going to bear fruit. So, you've got to get those things out of your life. It's good that the Father begins to take some things out of our lives, isn't it? We have a lot of different interests and desires. We can find ourselves branching off into all kinds of different things. Then, we wake up one day, and look at ourselves, and we go, "What have I done that's been productive?" Then you realize, "Nothing that I've done is going to last or make an impact on people. It's not eternal."

The way it reads within the passage is "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."

Now, the question in this setting is what did He say? I am reminded about how wonderful the word of God is to clean me up. I was thinking about this just when I was going to this particular passage, I go, "Lord, I don't even know if I can preach this because of all the convictions that he's throwing on me by the passage." You realize that the word of God begins to cut into the bone and the marrow, and it operates on you. Obviously, God can operate on you in many different ways, but how wonderful it is that His word cleans us up and begins to take things out of our lives.

I want to show you something in Psalm 119. By the way, if you've ever been in Psalm 119, I think most of us understand by now that it goes from A to Z on the importance on the word of God and why you need the word of God. So, all the way through Psalm 119 he's talking about the value of the word of God. All of the paragraphs are "Aleph", "Beth", and it goes through the Hebrew alphabet. Each of the beginning lines actually begin with those particular letters.

At the very beginning of this particular Psalm, the way he starts off is,

"How blessed are those whose way is blameless,
Who walk in the law of the LORD."

In other words, you want to get clean? Do what God says. It's pretty simple, isn't it?

(Psalm 119:2) "How blessed are those who observe His testimonies..."

(Psalm 119:3) "They also do no unrighteousness;
They walk in His ways."

God, I want to keep Your ways.

Now, if you drop on down to verse 9, what does it say?

"How can a young man keep his way pure?
By keeping it according to Your word."

Once again, live according to what God says and He will make you pure. It then says this once again in verse 11, “Your word I have treasured in my heart”. Do you want your heart clean? Then long for the right things. Desire the right things and God begins to purge your heart. Of course, all the way through, “I delight in Your words,” “I delight in Your statutes,” and “I love the things that You say.”

Then, if you would drop on down to Psalm 119:67. We oftentimes read these particular passages.

“Before I was afflicted I went astray,
But now I keep Your word.”

(Psalm 119:68) You are good and do good;
Teach me Your statutes.”

The point is that God is cleaning us up by using His word. Once again, there are things that He brings into our lives that begin to cause us to turn to Him. So, you may have all kinds of pains and sorrows because you went the wrong way and did the wrong thing, but all those things are making you run to Him. Then, He begins to do the cleaning as He says, “You did this wrong. You need to do this.” There’s a cleaning process.

He goes on and says in verse 75, “I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous,
And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.”

Once again, all these passages are dealing with the word of God, and how it begins to purge. So, Jesus in the context of John 15 has been saying something that is purifying them. Here again, it’s important to understand that the message itself has not been a complicated message. It’s been complicated because we can’t see things when we have other agendas that God is wanting to do. Let’s say that you come to the Lord in a Bible study, and you begin to study a particular passage. If you have an agenda of your own, you’ll start reading the passage, and you’ll go, “I don’t get it. It doesn’t make any sense.” The reason why is because you’re looking for the wrong things.

In John 14 it starts off with “Don’t let your heart be troubled,” right? Well, the question is why is their heart troubled? As you begin to go through this particular passage, you begin to realize that one disciple after the other is saying, “I need to know this,” “You need to tell me this,” “I don’t know where we’re going,” “I don’t know the way”. They’re all saying those kinds of things, and Jesus says, “You don’t get it, do you? This is about loving God.” If you’ll understand that it’s about loving God, you’ll get it.

Here again, I won’t go into too much detail of this passage, but if you’ll drop on down to John 14:15, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”

“Oh, but keeping His commandments are so hard. I can’t even memorize them all.” God says, “If you love Me, you’ll do them.” He just boils it down to a very simple concept. He then talks

about the fact that you need the Spirit within you because you're not thinking right. What does He call that Divine Spirit according to verse 17? "The Spirit of truth." That's the reason they can't understand the passage without it.

(John 14:21) "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me..."

Once again, you can make a theological debate about this all you want, but what's the simplicity of the passage? If you love God, you will do what He says. That's the passage.

"... and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

In other words, your eyes will be wide open; you'll understand. I pray that the eyes of your heart will be opened.

(John 14:23) "Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word..."

How many times do you see the phrase "If you'll just love Me"?

"... and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."

(John 14:24) "He who does not love Me does not keep My words..."

(John 14:27) "Peace I leave with you..."

"I don't feel any peace."

Well, verse 28, "You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced..."

In other words, why can't you understand? "Because you don't love Me. If you'll be all in and really love Me, all these things will become really clear."

Jesus is cleaning them up, and He's conveying to them that "the one motivation you need to have is to love My Father above anything else." That's what you need to do. If you have that motivation, you'll know exactly what to do, and it will change the way you live. You will get on the right track, and everything will be clear, clean and pure.

Here again, I know that almost everything that He's been telling His disciples was being conveyed, but if you'll look in John 5:19; Jesus begins to talk with them and He makes an interesting statement when He says, "Truly, you guys do understand that I'm not doing anything unless Dad tells Me to do it." Then, verse 20 says that this is the reason why the Father loves the Son. He will state the same thing in John 10.

You'll then drop on down, and I just want to leave you with this verse in John 5:30, "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." Here again, why don't we understand what is going on? Because we are seeking our own will. If we only had the one pure agenda, "I only

want to do what God wants me to do”, then you would know exactly what to do. Everything would be clear, pure.

So, Jesus has been telling them this, and by the time you come to verse 15, He goes, “If you will love Us, if you will love Me the way you should, then We will abide. Everything will be ok.” That’s the purging. That’s the cleaning. In other words, like with Peter, “Do you love Me more than these?” So, who do you love? Once you have that settled, then you’re all cleaned up and you’re ready for service. The point is that it would be impossible for you to do anything productive with your life unless you did love God with all of your heart; because whatever you did, and you can tag it “ministry”, or “service”, with any other motivation in mind, you could produce nothing. This is a key point because even farmers realize that they could put a seed in the ground, but they can't make the seed grow. Something makes it grow beyond their ability because that thing is dead, but somehow it does grow. We realize that productivity, growth and good can only come from God.

So, Jesus says in John 15:4, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.”

We’ll put it another way, “Unless you have the same heart that I have that is given to you by the Spirit of God, ‘Dad, I just want to do Your will. I have no other agenda besides that,’ you will produce nothing.”

(John 15:7) “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

(John 15:8) My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”

In fact, He even goes on and says, “You do know the reason I chose you? I chose you to bear fruit.”

It reads this way in verse 16, “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”

So, what makes you productive? Pure motives. What’s the purest of motives? I’m only doing it for God. Once you’re there, then you’re going to produce. You’re going to bear fruit and it’s going to remain. Good is happening.

If you go back with me to the passage that we’re looking at; just to reiterate, when he’s dealing with the purity within the passage, you have to ask yourself why does he bring up in verse 15, “to the pure, all things are pure”? It doesn’t even seem to fit into the context unless you understand that the particular word makes reference to the cleansing of all the things that would drag you away from only wanting to do God’s will; dealing with productivity. “Why would you say that?” Because we’re dealing with all kinds of other people; rebellious men,

empty-talkers, and deceivers who are coming in with all kinds of ideas. They're telling you how to live your life and how it's going to be productive, but they're just lying. They are deceivers. So, there is a truth, and the truth is seen in Christ. You will produce, but you have to come in that simplicity; a purity of mind and of heart.

I'm just really thankful that in so many ways, I don't know exactly what was happening in the lives of many of the people in the church, but I can't help but believe that in Crete they had some people that had the character traits, but you can imagine that God was doing some pruning in their lives in order for this to take place. For somebody to be above reproach and so immersed in holding fast to the word of God which gives that interesting picture of embracing something as being very valuable; you have to say that clearly, they have been through some difficulty as the disciples had.

In verse 15, it says that "to the pure, all things are pure."

Now, in that context, he's not simply saying that the pure are going to perceive purity. He is saying that, but he's not simply saying that. Once again, understand the context. He's also saying that to the pure, they will be productive. So, to the productive will be productive because you're bearing fruit. The reason you're bearing fruit is because you are pure; you've been clean. Of course, that fits into the context of John 15. It fits in this particular context because why would you put somebody in office in the church that isn't going to be productive? You want somebody that's going to be productive. What's going to make them productive? Well, they need to have a heart solely bent on God.

Now, there is the other point, and I want you to see with me in Matthew 6. You can use this as a parallel text. It is as well dealing with the whole judgement, perception or discernment thing. Matthew 6:19 starts off, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth," right? Of course, that would mean once again that you have another agenda.

(Matthew 6:21) "for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

One of the reasons why you don't want to focus on the things of the world is because it will draw you away from the thing that's most important. So, where your treasure is, your heart is going to follow that. Whatever you invest in, that's what you're going to be thinking about and longing for.

(Matthew 6:22) "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light."

(Matthew 6:23) "But if your eye is bad..."

"Ponēros". Another description is greedy; longing for other things; discontent.

"...your whole body will be full of darkness..."

Have you ever tried to get something accomplished? If you were honest with yourself, you knew deep down inside that “this is something that I want to do for me.” So, you start pursuing it, and the more you pursue it, things get in your way, people get in your way, you get upset and frustrated. Then you start getting angry, and it was all because you wanted to have a good time or fun. So, you find yourself just so miserable. The point is if you’re going after your own selfish desires, you’re only going to find darkness. There’s no light in that. We know that he’s talking about the “bad eye” as being “greedy”. How do we know that? Well, because he will state in verse 24, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.” So, we know what he’s talking about, and it fits within the text. Here again, we’re talking about the clarity of eye; purity of eye; having eyes for God alone. When the focus is that clear, then you see everything that way. The people that you bump into are no longer people that are getting in your way of the things you’re trying to pursue; but they may be people that you can minister to and share the Lord with. It now isn’t an interruption to your life, maybe it was a divine appointment. You now begin to see things differently. Something difficult happens to you according to James, and you go, “I have something to rejoice over. God is making me stronger in my faith,” and you begin to see it differently; whereas, other people would see that and think, “Wow, what a terrible thing that entered into your life,” because they’re perceiving things from the defiled end of it.

If you look at the passage, antithetically, he uses the word “defilement”.

(Titus 1:15) “To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled...”

It can be used so many different ways, but the best way to describe “defiled” is “polluted” or “contaminated.” It is interesting that it doesn’t take a lot to contaminate something.

If you’ll look with me in Ecclesiastes 10; the word of God can just use a few words to say a tremendous number of things.

(Ecclesiastes 10:

1) “Dead flies make a perfumer’s oil stink...”

That doesn’t take much, does it? It could be the best soup in the world, but there’s a dead fly in your soup. Are you going to finish the bowl? Some of you may, but...How just one small thing pollutes and contaminates. This speaks to the necessity for complete purity. Once again, I know we think in terms of “it’s all relative” and “at least there’s only 20 flies in there, and not 50. So, I must be a lot better.” The emphasis is that it doesn’t take much to pollute. That’s why he uses the word “defilement” within the passage. Once again, if you were to parallel the whole concept of all the different views, it’s just God plus maybe one other thing. What other philosophy? “I believe we need to trust God and then this.” Now, what you’ve just done is contaminate the whole thing.

“To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving...”

This is a sort of incredulous perspective within the passage dealing with somebody that is unwilling to believe; even though they know the truth. We know that God loves us. We know that not one good thing will He withhold. You're just being incredulous if in fact you're not doing what He says. The interesting thing about this is that there are a lot of resources for us to go to and a lot of different opinions for us to listen to, a lot of people are talking about a lot of things, and you could read 1,001 devotionals about all of this, but still never change. You could debate about things that were really useless to debate about. When you think about all of the things that churches argue about, it should boil down to one thing: Is it going to bring you closer to God or not? If it's not going to bring you closer to God, stop it. It's just idle words that people are bringing up to either make themselves look important or whatever. Paul is going to specifically say to the Cretans that "You've got to love God and put these things to practice." He does it in a very practical way especially as he goes into chapter 2. He talks about older men needing to talk to the younger men. Look, tell them to use their head. Then, women, talk to the younger women about being selfless and caring for your children instead of thinking about yourself. Show them this example. Let her be an example.

Within the passage, we realize that there are these evil beasts and lazy gluttons that are in Crete. Once again, it doesn't mean that they're not educated, it just means that they're "evil beasts and lazy gluttons." They can do that and still have a lot of money.

"... but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure..."

Once again, put in the context that "purity" in and of itself is that which is not a corrupted desire. Then, it goes into that understanding that anything corrupt in its desire is polluted and contaminated; which makes it unfruitful or useless. That means their discussions are useless. Why? Because they're just trying to push their own agenda. It's not going to help you, but the words of God are going to heal people. If you and I could just start ministering in such a way that we would say, "Not to us, oh Lord. When I walk away, don't let them think about me, but about You. I've got to decrease, You need to increase. God, let my life be productive in the way that they can actually be healed; that their life can actually be transformed." This is why you never want to get into any kind of counseling situation in which people begin to think, "He's such a great counselor. He's going to fix me." Once they start thinking that then you've already lost the battle. Our job is to take their hand and put it in His. When we do that, we've done exactly what God has called us to do. That's where productivity comes from because we've placed them into the hands of life. Whereas, with me and my agenda it's just going to be death.

"To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind..."

It's the way you think. Here again, the Greek thought had a sense of "this is the place where you discern or make decisions and form judgements; forming a capacity to understand things."

"I don't understand. I can't understand the things of God." People will climb the highest mountain and go into Outer Space. They're trying to figure out the things of God. The simplicity

of this and that it goes back to the Romans 9 and 10; don't say that you're going into the heavens to find God. He's near; even at the door, just confess. Say "I love You" to Him.

"... nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled."

The reason why he throws in the word "conscience" is it's telling you that there comes a point when you stop knowing what is right and wrong. Paul will actually go on to talk about the searing of the conscience; the inability to perceive. I remember a number of years ago like 30 or 35, when I was just starting the ministry, I had this couple that wanted some counseling. So, I said, "Sure, if I could help in some way." I sat down with them and as we were talking, they were talking to each other, and we were trying to get to know each other. It just dawned on me that they were living together. So, I said, "Are you guys living together?" and they said, "Yeah." I said, "You do know that's wrong." Then they respond, "No." I said, "Yeah, it's wrong. I can show you where Scripture says it." They no longer knew what was right.

The wonderful thing about any man in Christ being a new creation is that it's like God heals our conscience. Clearly, our conscience can be so hardened. Paul talks about this in Ephesians 4; we become calloused to the things of God because of our own pursuits and lusts. You live long enough to manipulate the truth and make it fit into your lifestyle. You tell yourself enough lies that it really is ok, and you can bend this rule and that rule. Then, after a while, you don't know what is right and wrong. The passage says that they're polluted; not clean. Have you ever heard of the phrase "clear as mud"? "Can you see anything?" "No, I can't see anything." The god of this world has blinded their minds.

Now, it's interesting that he ends here in verse 16, "They profess to know God". Now, that's the talk. You can just imagine all of the talk, "Oh, we're philosophers" and "We're theologians". In Crete you had all those "experts." Some people really know what to say. You read in 2 Timothy 3, and it says, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Unfortunately, we've learned to talk the language, but nobody does the right thing.

So, it reads this way, "They profess to know God..." The way that phrase reads in the Greek is that the speak openly about it. So, they're not shy about talking about God.

"They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him..."

The way that the phrase "deny Him" is used within the text means that they're totally unlike the person that they say they know. They're totally unlike Him. "Oh yeah, I know God." Well, you don't look like Him because the God that we know is the God that's selfless. The God that we know is the God that truly is love, and it's in accordance with godliness. It can look like the "nice" thing to give somebody a lot of drugs, "Well, I'm just being generous. That's the kind of person I am. I'll give him drugs because it will make them happy." That is not kindness, is it? Nor is it godly because our truth is in accordance with godliness. The patterns and the way that we live and the things that we do make a difference. It doesn't matter what you say; what you do

speaks louder. It's like what Jesus said, "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord', but you don't do the things that I say?" Do you want to really be blessed? You'll be blessed if you do them.

Watch the phrase at the end, "being detestable and disobedient and worthless." Once again, that's your tie to purity. Why does God prune us? To make us productive; that our life would have worth and value. How does your life have value? It's a cutting word, but I can hear the Lord coming to me today, and saying, "Do you love Me more than these?" Now, that starts pruning you, and you begin to realize "Maybe I didn't; but if I do, I'll be productive, and my life won't be a waste or in chaos and disorder. Everything will make sense if I'll just long to do the things for Him." Isn't it amazing how simple truth can be, but how the evil one complicates and distorts, muddies up, pollutes, and contaminates?

Closing Prayer:

Father, we thank You for Your word, and the good reminder that there is such a thing as order and there is such a thing as peace. There is such a thing as having a life worth living, and it all boils down to, "will I love You solely? Will I put You first in everything? Will everything that I do and every pursuit that I go after place you above anything?" For God, You told us that if we were to just give a glass of water in Your name, we would never lose that reward. It's just water, but we did it for You. We give You thanks in Jesus' name. Amen.