

Sunday Morning Message

October 28, 2018

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff

Topics – Strife

Text – Titus 3:1 - 11

Congregational Reading – Titus 3:8 - 9

Introduction

Read Titus 3:1 - 11

Titus was a Gentile convert of the Apostle Paul, who had ministered for him in various capacities, and in many different places. He had been with Paul on his third journey, and was responsible for delivering 2 Corinthians and at least one other letter to the Church at Corinth.

Here in this letter, we find Titus on the Isle of Crete, which is just to the south of Greece in the Mediterranean Sea. We are told in chapter one that Titus' responsibilities were to "set in order the things that are wanting", and to "ordain elders (or pastors) in every city." (Titus 1:5)

Crete was apparently a place that had a lot of spiritual problems. Read Titus 1:10 – 16.

Titus, like all believers, including you and me, was commanded to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." (Jude 3), but according to our text, he was also admonished to not be contentious, and to be careful that he did not waste his time debating over things that did not matter.

In Titus 3:9, Paul admonishes Titus to avoid arguing over certain subjects. He was basically telling him in the vernacular of today, "Don't sweat the small stuff."

I am a debater by nature. I actually enjoy a good debate, and even a passionate discussion, especially when it comes to arguing a certain point of view or belief from the Scriptures.

Example – Pastor Stahl and I argue and debate over the identity of the two witnesses in Revelation 11. I think they are Elijah and Enoch. He thinks they are Elijah and Moses. When we get to Heaven, he will find out that he was wrong. ☺ Seriously, we have debated this point for many years and we have fun doing it, but we don't get angry with each other, and both of us realize that the subject of the witnesses is a very minor point in the Bible. Neither of us is 100% sure that we are right.

Example – My friend Tony and I used to debate a lot about all kinds of Bible subjects. People observing us used to think we were arguing, but we were both just passionate about our opinions.

The older I get in the Lord, the more careful I am about what I debate about, and who I debate with.

Example – The other day I was teaching on 1 Corinthians 7 in my class on Paul's Writings at Vision Baptist College. One of my college students and I got into a little bit more of a passionate

debate about divorce and remarriage, which is another very controversial subject in the Scriptures. No two preachers that I know have exactly the same perspective on what the Bible teaches about this very sensitive subject. Included in this discussion were questions like: are there any biblical grounds for divorce? Can a divorced person remarry according to the Bible? Can a divorced person serve as a deacon or pastor within a church? These are all important questions, and while teaching the subject, I offered my opinion along with other viable positions that other pastors might take. This student began asking a lot of specific “what if” questions. He was very passionate about trying to convince me of his opinion. He was a little too passionate. In the course of the discussion I found out that this subject was very personal to him. I had to diffuse the debate. In other words, I decided that this debate was not worth fighting over. It was not going to be profitable to either one of us to continue. I left him with my opinion, but also declared that I could be wrong.

Debating can be enjoyable, especially for people like me; but it can also be harmful and dangerous.

Read also 2 Timothy 2:14 – 26

Practical Thoughts

- 1 Don't get into heated discussions about things that do not matter. (Titus 3:9)

He mentions foolish ($\mu\omega\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ – *mōros*) questions. Stupid arguments. This could have the idea of someone asking questions about things that do not matter. Perhaps the person asking you is asking insincerely, trying to start an argument.

There are some things that are worth debating. Important matters of the faith such as the inerrancy of Scripture, the deity of Christ, salvation by grace through faith are all important issues and should be defended passionately, yet lovingly. However, there are also some minor doctrines, and some gray areas within Scripture that are simply not worth getting all worked up about.

Illustrate – Frank Mondrosch is an amateur herpetologist. He knows a lot about reptiles and amphibians. He is a snake guy. Often people from south Jersey will tell him about the water moccasin that they saw at the creek by their house. The only problem is that there are no water moccasin's in south Jersey. The farthest north they are is in the North Carolina and Virginia border. But, most of the time, Frank does not argue with these people. He just nods his head. Why, because it is not worth debating about. Somebody once told him that they saw a ten foot timber rattlesnake. The problem is that the record size for a timber is 74 inches, or a little over 6 feet. But, Frank doesn't argue.

- 2 Don't get into extended debates with people who only want to argue, but whose minds are closed to the truth.

"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil

surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself." (1 Timothy 6:3-5)

Illustration – Years ago, A friend of mine and I were out soulwinning in Seaside Heights. We were going from door-to-door trying to talk to people about the Lord. One of the first doors we knocked a man answered, and at first he seemed to be very interested. He listened enthusiastically, and began to ask a lot of questions. However, after a while, we could tell that this guy was trying to direct the conversation, and it turned out that he was a Jehovah's Witness, actually an elder. My friend was caught up in the debate, and so was I for a while. But, it dawned on me after a while that we were wasting our time. He wasn't listening to us; he was trying to convert us. So, I decided to move on. Next door to this home was a laundromat, and inside the laundromat was a lady with her two children washing their clothes. I struck up a conversation with her, and she was very receptive, and I believe that she prayed and received Christ as her Saviour.

Some people are "one note Nellies;" they are always focused on one issue.

Illustrate – Years ago, a lady visited the church who was very convicted about debt. She was adamantly opposed to any Christian using any kind of credit. She was opposed to credit cards, car loans, even mortgages on homes; and' she would argue her point to anybody who would listen. She asked me one day if our church would take out a loan for the construction of a new building. I said that we would. She got very angry with me, and left the church over it. She was consumed with this one issue, but there were many other areas in her life that needed work, but she had only one thing on her mind – debt.

Warren Wiersbe said: "I have learned that professed Christians who like to argue about the Bible are usually covering up some sin in their lives, are very insecure, and are usually unhappy at work or at home."¹

3 You need to avoid argumentative people and people who are actively engaged in advocating or promoting false doctrine. (Titus 3:10 – 11)

Conclusion – Don't sweat the small stuff. There will be times that you will need to contend for the faith, but you do not have to argue over everything.

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:" (Hebrews 12:14)

Illustration – Gerald and Jessica wedding. There were all kinds of people there. Some lost people, but mostly Christians. The Christians were of many different stripes, There were some who were extremely conservative. Some, who were more liberal. But, everybody was getting along. Our common bond was Christ. At that wedding the most important doctrine united all of us. We were united by our love for the Lord and our love for the bride and groom; and we all enjoyed the unity that we shared.

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 2, p. 268). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.