

# GOSPEL UNITY 1/20/19

GM everyone, I am glad that we didn't get snowed out today like last weekend. Unfortunately we missed a great opportunity to hear from a Pastor in Malawi Robert Manda share about his Ministry and what God is doing in rural South East Africa. Robert Pastors a church in Malawi and also trains and equips other Pastors and sends them out. So we were bummed out that he didn't get to share with you all. Hopefully in the near future he will be able to come back.

I am going to be wrapping up our last sermon in our "Titus" series

Just to refresh your memory and give a quick background:

- The book of Titus was written by the Apostle Paul
  - Paul used to be called Saul. Who was a bad guy.
  - He was a Pharisee- He was a terrorist... He would murder Christians
  - What we know is when there was movement happening in the early Church-
  - Pharisees were not ok with this. In Act's 7 it talks about how Saul was responsible for the the first Christian martyr.
  
  - Then in Acts 8 scripture tells us that Saul would "enter house after house, drag off men & women, and put them in prison.
  - But with that being said the Gospel was still spreading.
  - The early church was gaining traction
    - In Acts 9 finally Saul was on his way to Damascus to deliver papers that gave him authority to basically capture Christians, throw them in prison, and then put them to death.
  
- But little did Paul know that he was going to have a life changing encounter with Jesus. And it changed him forever. He would never be the same.
- Fast forwarding a little bit Paul gets baptized, and starts proclaiming The Messiah.
- When Paul arrives at the Church of Antioch, it is believed this is where he first met Titus.

## **Who is Titus?**

- Titus was a young Pastor.
- Was a very strong witness of the Gospel. A trusted companion of Paul.
  - Paul would lead and drop Titus off at certain places to help establish Leaders/Churches.
  - What we know is that Paul leaves Titus in Crete to appoint Elders to combat false teachers. And this is where he is writing this letter which we call the book of Titus. Only 3 Chapters.

- So as I have been reflecting the past few sermons and reading through the book of Titus I can't help but think how it talks about what a healthy Church looks like.
  - In the 1st Chapter Paul is explaining to Titus why he was there. To appoint elders. He goes into great detail on what a qualified elder is.
  - In the 2nd Chapter Paul makes it crystal clear that 'sound doctrine' involves teaching the whole church from top to bottom how to **be**: how to live a life in accordance with sound teaching.
  - Paul even states in verse 15 to encourage and **REBUKE** with all authority. Let no one disregard you.
  - Also in the 2nd Chapter Paul explains what it looks like for the older generation to be pouring into and discipling the younger generation.
    - So 3 big things he's covering here: Appointing Elders, sound doctrine, and discipleship

And today what we are going to be talking about are those who are divisive. Those who gossip and slander others. So not necessarily a fun text for me to be preaching. But don't shoot the messenger.

- This brings the letter full circle b/c what's the result of false teaching, lies, legalism and 'doing whatever you want'? **DIVISION!**

The text that we are going to be looking at today is Titus 3:8-11

- Im sure you remember December Pastor Bill preached on saying the hard things. This is one of those texts.
  - If we are going to be a people that is going to combat false teaching, then we must learn how to say the hard things!
- But before we do that, **please pray with me.**

So right before verse 8 which we are going to read. Verses 3-7 is basically:

- A beautiful summary of the kindness of God to his people who do not deserve it.
- Paul is saying to Titus "you too were once deceived and disobedient." So he is saying be kind, avoid fighting and always show gentleness".
  - Bill explained this two weeks ago if you want to go back and listen
- Our text that we are about to dive into is going to show us **WHAT IT MEANS** to keep the Gospel central, **WHY** must we keep the Gospel central, & **HOW** we keep the Gospel central.

## Titus 3:8-11

**This saying is trustworthy. I want you to insist on these things, so that those who believed God might be careful to devote themselves to good works. These are good and profitable for everyone. But avoid foolish debates, genealogies, quarrels, and disputes about the law, because they are unprofitable and worthless. Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning. For you know that such a person has gone astray and is sinning; he is self condemned.**

- Notice the 3 commands in this text.
  - **1. Insist on these things-** Be committed to this message. Don't move away from this. Keep this Gospel message as the CORE.
    - In Verse 8: Paul is saying "Stress the Gospel". We can never talk about the Gospel too much.
  
- **2. Avoid foolish controversies-** It's fair to say we all are guilty on some level of engaging in arguments about things that don't really matter.
  - All of us have to realize there are some fights that we should avoid.
    - That could even mean theological debates
  - There are people in the Church today that get fascinated with little minutia in the Bible but completely miss the point of the Bible.
    - For Paul and Titus in Crete this was legalism in the form of people saying you MUST get circumcised or licentious people saying you can do whatever you want.
  
- It's sad because this causes much division in the Church. Pride and ego take over. I like to call it "Cage Stage". Where sometimes you just have to throw those people in a cage to contain them so there is little to no damage.
  - What I am not saying is that Doctrine doesn't matter.
  - Most of you know that here at Revolve we are committed to Sound teaching.
  - Pastor Bill is a student of the Word along with all of the Elders.
  
- Last weekend we hosted Pastor Robert Manda from Malawi.
  - I shared with him what I was going to be preaching about this Sunday, and he began to laugh. I asked him "why are you laughing". And he said "You Americans are so funny what you argue about." And he went on to share

about some stories he has heard on why Churches have split over quarrels, or why certain people have left the Church here in America.”

- He said “Don’t get me wrong, we have our issues, and disputes, but we ALWAYS reconcile because that’s what scripture commands us to do”.
  - You see, here in America if our feelings get hurt, or if there is a relationship fall out- what do we do- we run away. We go right down the street to another church.
- So we know there are problems today in the Church ...and unfortunately there were problems in the early Churches also. Verse 9 shows us that:
    - These troublemakers (Judaizers) attempted to add to the words and the work of Christ. They rejected the idea of salvation through faith in Christ alone. These men were always contradicting the truth and looking for a debate.
    - Remember what Paul said in **Titus 1:10**:
      - **For there are many rebellious people, full of empty talk and deception, especially those from the circumcision party. It is necessary to silence them; they are ruining entire households by teaching what they shouldn’t in order to get money dishonestly.**
  - Criticism runs deep in us- we are never going to conquer our own critical hearts.
    - But there is one that did. Jesus the one person in History who had the right to be critical. A sinless man, who was innocent. Came here to serve and not be served.
      - He would be mocked, slandered and scorned.
      - People would say horrible things to him, spit on him, throw human waste at him.
        - You see Jesus had every right to speak.

But what look what Isaiah 53:7 says:

**Like a lamb led to the slaughter and like a sheep silent before her shearers, He did not open His mouth.**

- Think about it: While Jesus is struggling to get air into his lungs, because his body is so stretched that his rib cage is breaking: What does he say?
  - I will tell you what he doesn’t say- He is not screaming at yelling back at them, He is not trying to claim his innocence..He is not condemning them

- He cries out to God the Father and says “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do”
  - You can tell yourself all day that you need to be less critical- and you are right
  - **But it’s only when your heart is awed by Jesus victory over criticism that you really begin to change.** It’s only when our hearts affections are moved off of ourselves and onto Jesus that we really begin to experience deep and profound change.
  - That is why we must stay centered on the Gospel
  - **Only the Gospel has the power to change**
  - We become like Jesus the “peace-maker”
  
- So to RECAP: we have seen **What** it means to keep the Gospel central:
  - Insist on these things, avoid these things.
  
- We have seen **Why** we need to keep the Gospel central
  - Because it’s the means of change. It’s the power of change.
- Let’s look at **How** we keep the Gospel central:
  - This is the 3rd command Paul gives to Titus in this scripture
    - **3. For people that stir up division-** have nothing to do with him
      - Maybe that sounds harsh. It sounds strong. But notice who Paul is talking about.
        - Paul is not talking about a new believer that has questions. He is not talking about wrestling with certain theological convictions. He is not talking about a discouraged person who needs encouraged
          - Paul is talking about those who are divisive.
          - Those who are pursuing foolish controversy
- I have 3 specific examples of what Paul is referring to in regards to “divisive people”
  - **1.** A false teacher- They could be twisting scripture or completely misrepresenting who God is. An example is someone saying we are reincarnated after we die, or that Jesus was a good man and a great teacher but not the Son of God, that person should be confronted because their false teaching is potentially divisive. EX:
  - **2.** Someone who flagrantly flaunts their immoral behavior. They brag about their sin. But they call themselves Christians and refuse to repent of their sin
    - Remember in 1 Corinthians 5:6 Paul rebuked the leaders in Corinth for not confronting a man in their church who was living in incest.



- And so the great question for each of us is: Is Jesus at the Center of your life?
  - Are you worshipping Jesus? Are you confessing to Him? Are you obeying Him? Are you praying to Him? Seeking to know Him in His Word.
- The greatest danger for us is that we adopt the language of Gospel Centrality without the reality.
- What I mean by that is we could become a Church that's really good at doing Gospel Centered stuff but not really worshipping God personally.
  - What are you worshipping? We all worship something. We all make something ultimate in our lives. We all make something priority in our lives.
    - Is it your job? Your spouse? Is it your success? Something you wish you had in life? Chasing after success?
- My story of wanting to be in a band: Freshmen year of Highschool
  - I have shared this story with our youth in Student Ministry a few times. And they love to laugh at me (esp. The Newby girls)
  - I remember going to a concert where a bunch of bands from my highschool played. Thought it was so awesome & cool.
  - I knew that's what I wanted to do. My friends and I just decided we were going to be in a band. And picked who was going to play what. With no real experience or lessons.
  - So I buy a drum set- we end up practicing in my small shed at my parents house (8X14). We finally have our first show lined up to play at the Dias Creek Fire Hall in Cape May Courthouse. There was close to 150 people there. And we were the opening band.
  - We played our first song, and I don't think one person clapped at the end of the song. It was embarrassing. It was really hard to get through the rest of our set songs because our band started realizing- nobody liked our music. Which I get. Because it was bad...
  - I remember coming home and my Mom asking me how it was- and I don't remember what exactly I said to her- but I do remember going upstairs in my room and crying.
  - Here I was placing my identity in who I wanted to be. I wanted to be known, I wanted to be liked by everybody. And it all came shattering down.
  - Little did I know or even understand at the time- It's not people's opinions that defines me. It's who God says I am. His child.

- I was chasing after a identity I wish I had. Chasing after success.
  - And so HOW do we keep the Gospel Central in our lives? We keep the Gospel central **by worshipping Jesus**
  - We lose focus of the Gospel when we make things priority over God
- And so to take a step back- **why is Paul explaining to Titus to: Avoid foolish debates and to reject divisive people? Unity**
- Did you know that a few hours before Jesus' arrest he prayed for one thing specifically
  - I'll give you a hint, it wasn't for God the Father to give him strength knowing the pain he was going to endure on the cross, it wasn't him begging God to help him flee from his captives.
    - No, he had one thing on his mind:
    - He prayed for those who believed in Him to have unity
    - I will say it again- he prayed for those who believed in Him to have unity.
      - There are thousands of Christians in America today that claim they don't need to be apart of the Local Church. My argument to them is do you realize that you are called to Community. You are called to love one another. How can you do that in isolation? And not be connected to other believers
      - We are called to edify the Church. What I mean by that is: We should be an eager people to serve within the church to help teach, serve, and exercise our spiritual gifts!
      - We are called to glorify God. God is glorified when we are in unity.
- Let's look at John 17:20-21
- **20 "I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word. 21 May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us.**
- So we see Jesus is praying for- Unity
  - He's praying for the idea for all of us to be unified
  - What he is not saying is uniformity- We all don't talk the same and walk the same. We are not all wired the exact same like robots

- When we look back in the beginning of **Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.**
- God created and intended 2 genders. Male & Female from the very beginning! Not just one gender.
  - And then in one chapter later he is uniting them to marriage.
    - **Genesis 2:24 says “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.**
    - They are not forming one gender- but there is a beautiful picture of what unity looks like. What God intended.
- We live in a world where there is DIFFERENT- Nationalities, races, languages, cultures, traditions, styles, values.
  - None of these things can truly unite us. SAMENESS is not ONENESS.
  - Repeat
  - Having the same Nationality does not unite us. Speaking the same language doesn't unite us. Having the same culture doesn't unite us.
    - How many hear know that only the Gospel can truly unite us
    - Only the Gospel can break the chains of racism
    - Only the Gospel can give us eyes to love people the way God loves
    - Only the Gospel can unite divisive people.
- We live in a world of disunity- whether it's our families where we have broken relationships, work environment, our government. Republican/Democrat, FOX News/CNN.
  - We are a divisive sinful people
- Churches today have a lot of values. Some churches value doctrine, political correctness, events, programmes, or discipleship. And it's not that these things are not important, but God declares that in His kingdom, nothing is as important as **believers being united.**

Every Thursday Pastor Bill & I pray with 4-5 Local Pastors all from different Churches here locally in Cape May.

- I think on all of their behalf I can say that we come together because we understand the importance & power of unity.
  - We all have a common purpose. We know our mission.

- And we are committed to praying with one another to see God move in miraculous ways. For God to bring those who are spiritually dead right here in Cape May County, and bring them LIFE!

- **There is power in UNITY**

- So we must ask the question, why is it that God cares so much about the unity among believers?
- Let's go back to Jesus' prayer to God the Father. **John 17:21 (end of verse 21): that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.**
  - Church we are called to be unified, so we can make the Gospel known to all people.
  - Yes we the Local Church should be reaching people here in Cape May County. That is what the Local Body should be committed to. But we are also commanded to reach every nation!
  - There are thousands of unreached people groups in the world today. What I mean by unreached is- they have no access to the Gospel. They have never heard the name of Jesus. And get this, no one has ever told them how they can go to heaven.
- So if you are sitting here today and you believe this book (the Bible) is true from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation and that all of us here are in desperate need of a savior:
  - Then we should absolutely be praying for the Nations. And not just praying, but giving to the Nations and considering going. Whether that is for a week out of your life or God is calling you to full-time missions.
  - A gentleman who is in my Discipleship Group Roy Nagel, shared briefly with me that God has blessed him & his wife with their schedules and finances to where they can commit 3-4 months out of the year to serve overseas.
    - We are not called to live in a comfortable lifestyle
    - We should not be blending in with the rest of the world
    - The Church doesn't exist to entertain the saved. It exists to train disciples to glorify God and reach the lost.
- So to recap- Paul gives Titus 3 commands:
  - He says to "insist on these things"- which means stay committed to the Gospel message.

- 2nd: Avoid foolish controversies- Paul says they are unprofitable and worthless. A waste of time. Sideways energy. You won't be able to stay committed to the mission when you are focused on foolish controversies.
      - Stay focused on the Gospel
    - 3rd: Those who are divisive, have nothing to do with them. We gave 3 specific examples of who these people could be-
      - 1. False teachers
      - 2. Christians who flagrantly flaunt their behavior- they brag about their sin.
        - We as Christians are called to a higher standard. We are commanded to pursue holiness. And so bragging about your sin leads to non-believers away from the cross. They see there is nothing different in you then the rest of the world.
      - 3. Gossipers, slanderers, those who spread rumors.
- We then asked the question- Why does Paul warn Titus of all of these things.
  - Why? Because we have a job to do, a mission to win
    - That is for us (the Church) to be in unity for the sake of the Gospel!
    - How crazy is it that hours before Jesus is lead to the cross- he specifically prayed for those who believe in Him to have unity.
    - So that God would be glorified!

Lets pray.

(Pray specifically for God to unify all believers, not just here at Revolve but the Global Church. We would avoid foolish things like Paul says are unprofitable and worthless. Pray that we would be a people that offers grace but also a people who is bold enough to hold one another accountable.)