Titus 3:7–11

A Ministry in the Word

Scripture Reading

> *That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*

Heirs According to the Hope of Eternal Life

Verse 7 states the crowning purpose of all that God has done: that having been justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Heirship in the world is complicated by the finite size of earthly inheritances — joint heirs divide it, and each receives a portion. The inheritance of which Scripture speaks is not diminished by the number of those who share it. We are joint heirs with Christ, and everything belongs to Him — and as joint heirs we share it all with Him, not portions of it.

The hope of eternal life is not doubt about whether we possess it. It is the forward-looking aspect of what is also a present reality. Paul regularly presents eternal life as lying before us — including the full transformation of the body into the likeness of the Lord's own body of glory — while John presents it as the present possession of every believer. Both are true from their respective angles.

And when we arrive in glory, it will feel right. The Lord Jesus is there, and He is our Saviour. We will be where we belong, where the life we have from God has always been pointing us.

The Word Is Faithful — Insist Strenuously

Verse 8 calls for strenuous insistence. Darby renders it: *I desire that thou insist strenuously on these things.* These are not matters on which mild suggestions are appropriate. The grace of God, the kindness and love of our Saviour God toward man, the washing of regeneration, the renewing of the Holy Spirit, justification by grace, heirship according to the hope of eternal life — the word is faithful as to all of these things, and they are to be insisted upon with energy and strength.

The purpose of this insistence is practical: *that they who have believed God might be careful to maintain good works.* Note carefully: they who have believed God — not believed in God, as one might acknowledge the existence of a supreme being. To believe God is to take His side, to declare Him to be true, to receive what He has said and sit in judgment on oneself accordingly. That is repentance and faith together. And those who have truly believed God in this sense will care about good works — not as a way of earning favour, but as the natural fruit of the life that has been given them. Doctrine forms practice. Good works flow from the faithful word received.

These things are good and profitable to men. Not the latest religious fad, not transcendental meditation, not whatever notion sweeps across the religious landscape and then fades away after its season. The truth of God's grace and salvation and justification, expressed in the good works of a believing life — these are what is genuinely good and profitable for human beings.

What to Shun — Foolish Questions, Genealogies, Legal Controversies

Verse 9 gives the counterpart: shun foolish questions, genealogies, strifes and contentions about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain. Foolish questions often carry hidden within them a seed of unbelief — an unwillingness to take God at His word. A question like *where did Cain get his wife?* has proved over centuries to be a vehicle for raising doubts about the early chapters of Genesis. Not every person who wonders about it has the same degree of unbelief — but the question itself has a history that reveals what lies beneath it.

Genealogies that lift up men on the basis of natural descent are equally to be shunned. James's epistle gives the finest example of avoiding them: if James was indeed the Lord's brother, the beginning of his letter — addressed to the twelve tribes in the dispersion — was exactly the place to mention it. He mentioned nothing of the kind. He called himself a bondman of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, and no more. *Shun genealogies* is exemplified perfectly in what James did not say.

Strivings about the law had been a constant problem wherever Jewish believers carried their former religion into the assembly. And the same Judaizing tendency has reasserted itself in various forms in every generation — contentions about law and its place that accomplish nothing profitable but generate heat and division.

The Heretical Man — Already Outside

Verse 10 instructs Titus to have done with a heretical man after the first and second admonition. The direction here is notably not to put him out — because, as has been observed, the heretical man has already gone out. 1 Corinthians 11 speaks of rents and fractures among the saints, and warns that if these are not judged they lead to sects — to open separations. The heretical man has taken his opinions and his party and established himself in independence from the assembly of God. He has set up another gathering alongside the one gathered to

the name of the Lord Jesus, and that is the essential nature of what is wrong.

Verse 11 gives the reason for the finality of this: such a one is perverted and sins, being self-condemned. He is not a victim of some external subversion — he is perverted. His course has shown his character. He prefers himself, his opinions, and the company of those who share them, to the fellowship of the assembly of God. And in going on in that course he condemns himself by it — not in the sense that he says so, but in the sense that his own conduct is the self-indictment.

The parable of the darnel in Matthew 13 bears on the wider picture: the Lord told His servants not to root up the weeds lest they uproot the wheat with them. A crusade to stamp out error by force is not God's way in this age. The gospel going out in grace, winning souls for Christ — that is the better outcome. The patience of God is much to be noticed: He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

— Study ends —