

## *Antinomianism: What To Stress*

*At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless (Tit. 3:3-9).*

I would like to speak for a few minutes on Titus chapter 3 and verse 8; Titus chapter 3 and verse 8. It's these words that I'm interested in at this time: Paul, writing to Titus, says this: 'I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone'. 'I want you to stress *these* things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good'.

Well, I don't think there's any difficulty in understanding what the apostle means here! We can see, very clearly, the people he has in mind. It stands out, very clearly: those who have *trusted* in God; in short, believers. That is: not those who have just accepted the facts about the existence of God, but who know God as their Father because the Lord Jesus Christ is their Saviour. They have trusted him. They have turned from their sins in repentance. They have called upon the name of the Lord, and they are saved. They are justified. They are right with God. They are washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. They are clothed with the perfection of his righteousness. They have peace with God: justified.

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Paul is concerned about these believers, and what happens *after* their conversion. By coming into Christ, by faith, having been born again of God's Spirit, and then believing and repenting and turning to God through the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit has come into them, and they are new creatures in Christ Jesus.

If I'm speaking to a believer – here, now – as I say these words: 'You, my friend, this is what has happened you. You have been born again of God's Spirit. You have brought to trust in Christ. And it's said of you, as Paul writes to Titus: "I want you to stress *these* things, so that those who have trusted in God..."; and so on'. So I am addressing believers here – as Paul was addressing Titus about believers here. There's no problem with that.

Nor is there any problem, any question, any doubt, about what he wants. He wants these believers to 'be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good'. And the rest of his letter, and the rest of the New Testament, tells us what that is: the good works that follow out of our being justified. The good works do not contribute to our justification, but they are the outworking of our justification! But this is called 'sanctification', being made godly, being made obedient to Scripture, being conformed more and more to our Lord Jesus Christ. 'As I, so you', is the essence of New Testament sanctification. The standard before us, the merits of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, his accomplishments – there's the perfection – and as we are transformed into his image – this is what Paul was talking about here: 'be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good'. Not to earn, not to merit their salvation. But because they are saved, they will want to do it; because they are saved, they must do it. God has created us anew in Christ that we might live for his glory.

Now, I say, I don't think there's any problem about any of the things I've said so far.

But here we run into the buffers! Or, if I change the picture, here we come to the crossroads, or the fork, rather – the fork, yes, that's better – we come to a fork in the road! The *great* question

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is, the penetrating question is: How shall we attain to this standard? What method does Paul press upon Titus to bring these believers to this godliness and spirituality of walk and life?

Now, it is a fact – whether evangelicals and Reformed people realise it – it is a fact that the majority of the evangelical world believes that the way to reach this standard of holiness, and to reach this growth in experience and knowledge of Christ, and likeness to Christ, the way to reach that is for the preachers to preach to us the law, the ten commandments – as they call it ‘the moral law’. By pressing upon us the law, by our meditating upon the law, seeing the standard of the law – bearing in mind that, if we sin, there is punishment, so there’s an element of fear in it; there’s more than an element, for John Calvin, who formulated this system, which has so dominated the evangelical world, said that the law was like a whip hitting lazy asses, lazy donkeys. And this system, Calvin’s system, has dominated the evangelical and Reformed world for these past hundreds of years. And, even on a lower level, incipient level, a hidden level, as it were, much contemporary preaching and view of sanctification is: Conform to the rules! Meet the standards set upon you, especially by the teachers of the churches, and so on, then this will bring sanctification! The creeds, the Confessions, the systematic theology’s, the writers, the preachers – they nearly all say this: it’s the law!

I ask you! Paul tells us here! What does he say to Titus? He says: ‘I want you to stress *these* things, so that – in order that, with this purpose – that those who have trusted in God might be careful – thoughtful – to devote themselves to good works – to what is good. *Stress these things!*’

Well, Paul, what things did you want him to stress? Well, he would say to me: ‘Read what I said! Take it up at verse 3. You will see what we were: “Foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures”. Right! “We lived in malice and envy”; and so on. Now, then, come to verse 4: “But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us”. Notice it goes on: “Mercy... saved us...

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rebirth... renewal by the Holy Spirit... poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour... justified by his grace... heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying”. And I want to stress *these* things, so that those who are trusting, have “trusted in God, may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good” – good works, good things’.

Stress *what*? The mercy of God, the love of God in Christ, the regenerating power of the Spirit: the gospel, in other words, the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, the generosity of God through Jesus Christ our Saviour, our justification. ‘Preach this’, Paul says to Titus: ‘*Stress* this in your conversations, in your preaching ministry, in anything you say or do or think. *Stress* this!’

I ask: ‘Where is the law, here?’

Well!... I’m waiting... Where is the law, here? What is Paul’s motive for sanctification? What does Paul stress? He uses that very word: ‘stress’! What does he want Titus to stress? What does he want me to stress to you, now?

Believer, would you be holy? Then look to Christ! Remember what God has done for you in Christ: for he has saved you from your sins, and washed you, transformed you, brought you into the kingdom of light – out of the kingdom of darkness. Think of his mercy to you. Think of Christ!

Stress *these* things!

Believer! Look to Christ – not to the law! Any preacher hearing me, any writer hearing me, any theologian hearing me: Give up this stressing the law! Preach Christ, my brother and sister. Preach Christ! Look to Christ, my brother and sister. Rest upon Christ, the mercy, the love, the kindness of God in Christ, the power of the Spirit: ‘The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death’!

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And as I concentrate more and more upon Christ, and the gospel, increasingly shall I find myself drawn to him, and so produce fruits in my life to the glory of God.

And if I sin, I'm sinning against *this* love, and *this* mercy, and *this* forgiveness, *this* God – it's not against the law. It's not fear: it's *love*! Love casts out fear, but where there is fear there is no love. Cast out the fear, my brother and sister! Let us look to Jesus, let us look to him alone.

Notice how the apostle goes on: 'But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless'.

If Paul was standing here now, and I said to him: 'Paul should I preach law or gospel?' – what would his answer be? 'Should I get embroiled in the law, or should I get to lifting up Christ?' 'What should I do, Paul?' I think his answer is unmistakable: '*Preach Christ* to them – until Christ is formed in them!'

And I say that to myself – even as I preach him now, as I write about him: 'Oh! that my soul could *love him* more – the Lord Jesus – more and more, be conformed to him!'

If there is an unbeliever listening to me, these words have been said to believers. As Paul wrote to Titus, it was for those who have trusted in God. Now you have not trusted in God. You're an unbeliever! Well that which will sanctify us is that which saved us in the beginning. And it will save you, my friend! It's not 'it' at all! It is the Lord Jesus Christ! You are a sinner, and you will come under – well, you are under the wrath of God now – and you will suffer it for ever, if you die in your sins. But, as this passage says, from verse 3 on, if you look to Christ, if you trust in the mercy and kindness of God, if you call upon the name of the Lord, you will be saved, and everlastingly freed from your sins. Then you, too, will begin, with us, this pilgrimage of looking more and more unto Jesus, more and more reflecting, meditating upon, and rejoicing in, and singing about, and talking about, and thinking about, the great mercy of God toward us in our Lord Jesus Christ. And this will glorify God – in the saving of sinners and the sanctifying of saints!

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So... sinner look to Christ, now! Saint! Go on looking, looking to Jesus!