Eternity Daily Bible Study No. 272

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Titus 3:8-15
Faithful is the Word, and concerning these things I desire you strongly to affirm that the ones believing God should take thought to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men. (9) But keep back from foolish questionings and genealogies and arguments and quarrels of law, for they are unprofitable and vain. (10) After the first and second warning, avoid a man of heresy, (11) knowing that such a one has been perverted and sins, being self-condemned. (12) When I shall send Artemas to you or Tychicus, hasten to come to me at Nicopolis. For I have decided to winter there. (13) Diligently set forward Zenas the lawyer and Apollos, that nothing be lacking to them. (14) And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they may not be without fruit. (15) All those with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

Paul outlines the difference between a fruitful life - spent doing good works to meet real needs and an unprofitable life - spent arguing, chasing down bible trivia, legalism and genealogies, and being involved in divisions and heresies.

We have all met people who seem to spend al their life “doing research” into obscure prophecies or genealogies or very minor doctrines which edify no-one. They often draw up charts and diagrams and argue endlessly their particular point. Opinionated, factious, divisive and clamorous they are nuisances. They are seldom involved in constructive living or the fruitful meeting of real human needs.

Quarrelsome Christians are on the wrong track. Life is not about winning arguments or proving points – rather it is about agape love, faith, hope and good works done in the love of God for particular people in need. “Rightness” comes through justification, by grace, through faith, in Christ – and not through correct theology. The “righteous” person is the one that lives in holy love, not the one that splits hairs most accurately.

Paul insists that the Cretan Christians “maintain good works” rather than to “maintain precise theological distinctions”. Now theology is good and is a very worth subject of study – but it should not turn us into cranks or critics. There are good theologians and bible teachers who are called by God to break open His word. But theology is only one of the means God uses to instruct us to live a life of love in the knowledge of God - and thus theology is not an end in itself.

Theology informs living and that living should be fruitful, wise, useful and constructive and full of good works. One area I have seen that occur in is in urban ministry where good theology helps people create models of life and ministry to help the poor in the cities of the developing world. When you minister to the urban poor you NEED good theology and a deep knowledge

of Christ to sustain you amidst the pressures of the ghetto and the slum. You need theology to help you get a handle on human suffering and incarnational ministry and prayer and spiritual warfare and biblical economics and God's idea of justice. Now that sort of theology is done in order to do good works and bless others – and that is theology in the service of people and of God.

But there is another kind of "quack theology" that is argumentative, shrill, and divisive. It is theology for its own sake, knowledge that "puffs up" and tongues that tear down. Such theology does not belong in the household of Christ. Paul is quite clear about what should be done: "(10) After the first and second warning, avoid a man of heresy, (11) knowing that such a one has been perverted and sins, being self-condemned." Warn them, then avoid them. Give them no foothold among believers.

While we are to reject heretics and schismatics we should not let them turn us into furious, foaming, raging heresy hunters. There is no place for the Spanish Inquisition or for burning them at the stake. Heresy should not be allowed generate hatefulness in the Church – even in the name of purity.

These good works include the support of those in the ministry "(13) Diligently set forward (on their journey) Zenas the lawyer and Apollos, that nothing be lacking to them." In other words Titus was to make sure that Zenas and Apollos were well prepared and equipped to travel in the name of the Lord. There seems to have been some problem with the support of itinerant Christian ministers and this is also reflected in 3 John:
3 John 1:5-8 (CEV) Dear friend, you have always been faithful in helping other followers of the Lord, even the ones you didn't know before. (6) They have told the church about your love. They say you were good enough to welcome them and to send them on their mission in a way that God's servants deserve. (7) When they left to tell others about the Lord, they decided not to accept help from anyone who wasn't a follower. (8) We must support people like them, so that we can take part in what they are doing to spread the truth.

Good works include making sure that missionaries, evangelists and others who must travel are properly taken care of on their journey and not "let down" as occasionally happens. The "God will take care of you" attitude is often just a thin disguise for disorganization. Thoughtfulness, charity and careful attention to the detailed needs of others are things that I am sure God will reward greatly and which please Him.

Paul concludes with: "And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they may not be without fruit." We want to bear fruit for Christ and earn reward in Heaven. If we perform good works that meet real needs then this verse says that we will not be "without fruit". One such person who did this was Dorcas who made clothes for widows. (Acts 9) When she died everyone wept so much that the apostle Peter was called to raise her from the dead! Now Dorcas was not an evangelist or a pastor and may not have led a lot of people to Jesus but she was fruitful because of her good works. Fruitfulness does not depend on theology or position in the church - but on being a loving Christian who does good deeds to meet real needs.

Blessings,

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Special Project – Translation of Harvestime Church-Planting Courses into Tagalog

We wish to employ a team of four Filipino translators for one year to translate the 21 Harvestime modules into Tagalog (the language of the Philippines). This will cost about $800 a month and we still have to raise $600 a month of this. We would like 30 people to donate $20 a month to make this happen (starting April). [To see the Harvestime courses go to: http://www.aibi.ph/harvest/]
If this interests you send a cheque to John Edmiston 21744 Grace Ave. Carson CA 90745 and include a note saying “For Tagalog Translation Project”. (The AIBI does not yet have a US bank account but we are working on it.) Or use our online donation process and send an email to me saying “For Tagalog Translation Project” and tell me about the donation so I know how to designate the funds. To donate online go to: http://www.aibi.ph/aibi/donate.htm

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