



TIME OF GRACE®

The Power of "And": Confront and Comfort

Study Notes

Summary

Paul cared as much about doctrine as dieticians care about ingredients. What's contained in a person's belief system will either help or harm. Therefore, Paul pushes us to read the ingredients in someone's teaching . . . and rebuke those who deviate from God's truth.

- **Titus 1:9:** He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine.
- Christians must say, " _____
_____!"
- **Titus 1:9-16:** ⁹ He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. ¹⁰ For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group. ¹¹ They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. ¹² One of Crete's own prophets has said it: "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." ¹³ This saying is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith ¹⁴ and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth. ¹⁵ To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. ¹⁶ They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.
- **Galatians 2:11-13:** ¹¹ When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. ¹³ The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.
- Christians must say, " _____
_____!"

Four Squares of "Stop It!"

<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

- Titus 1:13: Therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith.

Points to Ponder

1. List at least five reasons why modern churches tend to comfort more than they confront.
2. **Agree/Disagree:** People who think confrontation is unchristian know little about Jesus Christ. (Check out Matthew 23 after you've wrestled with your answer.)
3. Read 1 Timothy 1:3-11. What do these words have in common with today's reading from Titus? What connection do they have to our spiritual lives today?

Homework for Next Week

Read Titus 2:1-10.

Time of Grace Ministry
The Power of “And”: Confront and Comfort
Titus 1:9-16
October 4, 2020

Pastor Mike Novotny

There are some Sundays where I would really like to skip church. For example, this one.

When you took your limited valuable time to be here today, I bet you came to church hoping for something encouraging, something inspiring; this pick me up that's going to kick you off through the week and fuel up your heart and your soul to follow Jesus. I'm guessing when you showed up you didn't want silence because that's not what we want from church, right? We want it to put wind in our sails, we want it to make us more excited to follow God and so, today is hard. And honestly, I'm a little concerned if you're here in church or you're watching on TV or you're podcasting this in your car that halfway through you're going to check out or you're going to change the channel or in your head you're going to think about changing your church.

And yet, I'm still going to preach it and here's why: Not just because I feel this moral obligation as a called servant of God that I kind of have to if I'm not going to pick and choose. But also because I've learned in life something that you've learned, too; that sometimes the stuff that is the hardest helps the most in the end. Have you learned that yet about life, in relationships, and in parenting and in excelling in sports that sometimes the hardest things in the moment, as you look back, you realize they help you and change you the most?

I learned that lesson the hard way about 20 years ago on the soccer field. I was down in Iowa playing a college soccer game and a routine chest trap turned tragic. I collapsed to the ground, I could barely breathe, they zipped me off to the hospital, they ran the x-ray looking for my obviously broken ribs, but they didn't find any. They said, sorry, kid, looks like a bad bruise. They handed me a bag of ice and they wished me the best. Until a doctor came running into the room with the x-ray in his hand and he said, "Son, you've got to call your parents." And he showed me right beneath those intact ribs was my lung that had collapsed; I'd blown a whole right into the side of it. And what followed his bad news was physically the most painful thing I've been through in my 39 years of life on earth. I remember groggily as they put that chest tube and slammed it in between my ribs. I remember a week later when my lung wouldn't heal, the ambulance ride to Madison for surgery. The staple they had to put in to make my lung shut. The muscle spasms that were so excruciatingly intense that when my family tried to ask me what's wrong, I was terrified to even speak or move. I remember the rookie nurse whose specialty was not the insertion of a catheter. Oh, you don't forget that. It was miserable, right? But do you know what? I'm glad that day in Iowa the doctor told me what he did. If he would have known the truth on the x-ray and hid it in his briefcase and refilled my bag of ice, I wouldn't be running around the soccer field today. And last Wednesday as I was kicking goals and running around with my friends, I didn't think for a second about my lung even though I have the scars to prove something happened.

And today, I hope you have that same attitude about this text. It is intense; there's half a verse of really encouraging news and then there's seven and a half verses of really intense teaching but I hope you believe deep in your heart that even if it's hard, after you heal, it's going to help your faith. So today, we're going to jump back into Titus chapter one. We're looking at the qualifications Pastor Paul says that a pastor must have to oversee God's people and here's what he says in verse nine: "The overseer," the pastor, "must hold firmly to the trustworthy messages it has been taught so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine."

So grab a pen and write this down. A pastor's job is this - we must say God is here. Every Christian, every church, every man who stands up in a place like this and oversees the people of God, we must say - we have to say, we get to say, and we want to say - God, the glorious God, is right here with his people.

And I wish I could say amen. But that was the first half of the first verse and here's what the rest says: "The overseer must hold firmly to the trustworthy messages he has been taught so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it." Paul continues, "For there are many rebellious people full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced because they're disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach and for the sake of dishonest gain. One of Crete's own prophets has said that Cretans are always liars, evil broods, lazy gluttons. This saying is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth. To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. They claim to know God but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good."

Well, there you go. They're not going to show up on Pinterest, right? Or be the next inspirational Christian tattoo. How'd Paul put it? Detestable, disobedient, unfit, corrupt, lazy gluttons, evil brutes, always liars, rebellious people. Titus, there are many of them and they must be silenced. In Greek, to silence someone means to put a muzzle on them. Paul says you've got to shut them up because they're ruining people's faith and it's not going to be easy and it's going to be a hard teaching but this is your job, Titus. Before another soul gets hurt, before soft words harden a single heart, you tell them. You have to. There's no other option but to be a coward.

In fact, Paul is so savage here he even names names. You catch that? He didn't just kind of hope that Titus would figure out those people are the people he's talking about. He says, "No, no, no. Especially those of the circumcision group." Those people. Here they are. They're wrong, muzzle them, shut them up, refute them, call them out, it's your job. Do you know the story of those guys? The circumcision group? Back 2,000 years ago, when the good news of Jesus' love and forgiveness, death and resurrection was spreading, there was this group of people, Jewish people, who said, "Yeah, believe in Jesus and you have to be circumcised and you have to keep a Sabbath day and you better have a kosher diet and you need to follow all these Jewish rules and the human commands that our rabbis have taught us. If you're really a child of God, you must do all of it." And apparently, there were so many people who belonged to that group and they were so persuasive and so powerful that even some of Jesus' closest friends got sucked into their teaching. In fact, do you know the story from the first century where the apostle Paul got in a

public fight with the apostle Peter? Let me show you what happened; Galatians 2. "When Cephas," that was Peter's given name, "came to Antioch," Paul says, "I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, Peter used to eat with the gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy so that by their hypocrisy, even Barnabas was led astray." Even Barnabas, Paul says. Even Peter, even those who knew Jesus the best, they stopped saying "Jesus" period. They started saying, "To be saved, you have to have Jesus plus," and Paul said it's got to stop. Like we've got to deal with this or it's going to mess with people's eternities. And so he calls out Peter, not gently, not in kind of an Oreo cookie "you're great, Peter, and stop it," and "You're great, Peter." He calls him out, he confronts him publicly, because he had to. Here's the apostle Paul, "Rejoice always. The peace that goes beyond understanding. You're saved by grace." That Paul said this: "And stop it."

That's the "and" of our big idea for today; write this down: Christians, pastors, faithful churches must say God is here and stop it. If what you say, if you what you teach, if what you believe doesn't line up with what Jesus said, stop it. So what in the world does that have to do with you? I mean, anyone here this week really tempted to join those guys from the circumcision group? No. Anyone tell you recently that you're not a true Christian unless you keep a kosher diet? No, times have changed, right? But I think there's some really good application here for me, for you, and for Christians living in the world today. In fact, my application looks a little bit like this chart; what I'm going to call the four squares of stop it.

These four things, once you understand them, will help you to cling to sound doctrine and be encouraged as God intends you to be. These matter so much so grab your pen and fill these in. First of all, we have to be very, very aware when people try to add to God's law. When instead of reading what God commands us to do and forbids us from doing, they add extra rules. Those rules can be personal preferences, denominational opinions, wonderful traditions, but when we insist on it, when we judge people because of it, you've got to stop it. Would you change the channel if I named some names right now? Fundamentalist Christians add to God's law. When you come to church, you better be dressed up or you're not honoring God. And ladies, your skirts better go down so far or you're not being modest. And you better not drink alcohol or smoke a cigarette or get a tattoo because you're not honoring the temple that God gave you. Oh and where is that in the Bible? Stop it.

Roman Catholics do this. A priest can't get married. Oh really? And where is that? Like Peter who was married? Like the apostles who were married? You can't eat meat on Fridays during Lent. Why's that? Well, because we say. Wait, so you made up a rule about eating meat to honor this season of the church year that you also made up and now we have to do it? Stop it. Traditional loving church people do this. If a pastor's not dressed in a certain way, if the music isn't a certain style, if you don't say a confession, an absolution, and the Apostle's Creed every Sunday, you don't really love sound doctrine. Oh really? So Peter and Paul really weren't worshipping when they came in their regular robes? So before the Apostle's Creed was around, the earliest Christians were doing what, dishonoring God? Come on, stop it.

Contemporary Christians do this, too. If the eyes aren't closed, if the hands aren't raised, are you just going through the motions? If you say the same old liturgy from page whatever in front of the hymnal, is it really worship? Stop it. It's so tempting but listen, God is pretty good at his job. If he wanted that rule, he would have written it down and he didn't so stop it.

That's the first square. Here's the second; is when people subtract from God's law. You know, you find that part of the Bible that you really don't like and it's messing with your lifestyle and it sounds really hard and it would mean denying yourself and picking up a cross and following God and so you drop it or you explain it away or you say there's some mysterious translation that Christians didn't figure out until just this year. Or maybe you have it on paper in your official documents but you never bring it up in church because you know what people will think and there's another church across town that would accept them. But Paul says no. There's so many applications to this. Most frequently, they happen with sex and with money. Do you have to give to the poor? Yes, you do. If you're a true Christian, will you give your first and your best to support the spread of the message of Jesus? It's obviously in there. Wait - is sexual pleasure really reserved for one man, one woman, after they have committed themselves to vows of love and respect? Yeah, it is. And the sexually immoral, Paul said, will not inherit the kingdom of God. Don't be deceived. You can't give God the middle finger and expect him to give you a hug when you die so stop it.

The third group of people are those who add to the gospel. Like the circumcision group, they say, Jesus is great. Jesus, and be circumcised, and then you're saved. Jesus, and speak in tongues, and you know you really have the Holy Spirit. Jesus, and do your penance, and your Our Father's and your Hail Mary's, and you'll know you're really part of his family. Jesus, and prosperity, Jesus and feelings, Jesus and never doing anything too bad when it comes to sin. But addition to the gospel denies the gospel itself. Stop it.

Or finally, those people who subtract from the gospel. Do you really need Jesus to escape the fires of hell? I mean, there are some really good people out there who don't believe in Christ. They're going to be okay, aren't they? God is love, isn't he? You don't need the blood, the cross, the empty tomb. If you're devout, if you believe something, if you're trying - Jesus didn't say that. He said God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him will not perish. In him. He is the way, the truth, and the life and apart from him, you can do nothing. You get nowhere.

Friends, that chart is insanely tempting for all of us. I bet one of those squares spoke very powerfully to you and let me take a guess which one it was. If you're a super compassionate person, if you just love people, you're tolerant, you're patient and you're kind, I bet you are very, very tempted to subtract from what God says. You don't want to see anyone miss out on the presence of God. You don't want to think that that sin has the power to separate anyone. You know great people who aren't followers of Jesus and isn't there room for all of us? You'll be very, very tempted to deny some of the things that Jesus explicitly said for the sake of being nice.

And for those of you who are much more conservative, those of you who are passionate about sound doctrine and teaching, I bet what's so tempting for you is to add. To not just think that this book is enough but, man, we have to make it more exclusive so that people like that are

obviously messing it up and people like us are doing it right. And we make a thousand divisions and after the divisions are done, somehow we're the really good ones. And for the sake of your soul and theirs, Paul says no. Christians must cling to sound doctrine and not human addition. Which means I'm about to be very, very tempted.

The other day, I got this really amazing email through our Time of Grace ministry. It was from a Jewish man here in the United States and here's what he wrote: "I've really been taken to heart by your words. I'm just worried what your pastor feels will happen to us Jews? I'm a Jew; it's something I'm proud of. I just don't know what I need to do in order to be loved by God. We have the same God, after all, but do you support Jews? Do you support Muslims? Do you support the good men and women and children of other religions or are we damned by you for not accepting Jesus as our total Savior?"

Those are good questions. What would you say? And which of those four squares is going to be the most tempting in our reply? I really know what I need to say to that man, with gentleness, with respect, with gratitude for his questions. And here's what I'm going to say. Do you remember this passage from the book of Titus we read before? "Therefore, rebuke them sharply." Here's why: "So that they will be sound in the faith." Why would we say stop it? So they can be sound, healthy, whole in the faith. And did you catch where this man was not whole? What about Jews, what about Muslims, he said. What do you think; are we damned? But that little line in the middle - let me read it again - he said, "I just don't know what I need to do in order to be loved by God." Whoever raised him, whoever taught him, did not teach him the most important thing in the universe; how to be loved by God. How to be absolutely sure after all is said and done, after all the things you regret and wish you could take back, at the end of the day, you're forgiven and loved by God. Sometimes we have to say to that, stop it, so we can look someone in the eye and smile and say, "And God is here."

And that's what I pray happens to you every time you come to this church, every time you watch this show at home, every time you flip on the podcast and listen in your car. Sometimes it might hurt, it might sting, you might feel judged because sometimes, God does judge us. But I hope at the end of it you know this: That you're still loved by God. That Jesus Christ came into this world, he confronted people first, and then he comforted them with his love. That there is forgiveness, there is grace, there is mercy that never ends for a person like you and a man like me. That we don't have to be afraid of life and death; we believe in God, a Holy Judge, a King of Kings who has the highest standards you could imagine. The same God who helps you meet those standards by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

So I'm encouraging you today, brothers and sisters, don't be cowards. To the people you know and love, don't add, don't subtract, give it to them straight. With kindness, with patience, with love, and with compassion, be a good doctor of souls. If God's x-ray said that something has collapsed, broken, or malfunctioning, tell them the truth because in the end, we want them to run the race and be whole and healed with God.

Let's pray.

Father, I can only imagine that there are people right now who are tempted to run, to think I'm some judgmental guy quoting some ancient book, and they're going to be fine. So I pray for your spirit right now to do in their hearts what I can't; to help them to see that sin is no joke. If your Son had to suffer torture on the cross for the sake of sin, then what they're doing is no joke. And I pray that that would so overwhelm and crush their heart that their pride would step away and they could come to you in repentance.

I'm sure, Heavenly Father, there are people here who are under such assault from the enemy that they maybe believe the lie that they're not forgiven and that you are not with them and that what Jesus did isn't enough. I pray, God, that your spirit would stop that thought in their hearts; that they could know that you are a God of unconditional love and amazing mercy.

God, here in America, we judge a church's success by the numbers. If attendance is growing, if more people are coming, we think that we're succeeding but that is not your standard. Your standard is faithfulness. In our lives as Christians, your standard is not popularity and acceptance; it's faithfulness. So help us to be faithful. Thank you for forgiving us when we're not. And I pray that your spirit would fill us that we'd be bold, we'd be the exact kind of Christians that you've called us to be, full of grace and truth. We pray this all with slightly heavy but hopeful hearts because we pray today in Jesus' name, Amen.