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Titus – Making Things Right

Chapter 2 - (vs. 13-14)

Well, we come to a pastoral epistle; that is to say that it is a letter that is both corrective and directive to a pastor to help him get things in order. The place that is out of order is Crete and the description speaks for itself; things are in disarray. The question oftentimes arises of why is it that certain places, families and organizations find themselves in disarray, chaos, confusion, or upset and anxious? Where does that come from? Sometimes, you look from the outward and you just see the appearance. The perception is they seem like really nice people and like they have it together. Then, you begin to look at the turmoil of their kids and their families, and you go, "Something's off." You can't have that many kids that bad without there being something off. So, you realize that there's something out of order. The question is, what? One of the things that this particular letter does is, it helps us with that. It begins to give us things to set right. When it talks about setting things in order, it's actually talking about putting things back upright.

One of the passages that we often think about is in Isaiah 5. When Isaiah writes to the children of Israel, even with Judah, he addresses a people that I would guess on the outside they look like they've got everything together. At the very beginning of Chapter 1, they're multiplying their sacrifices. I would think that if you're multiplying your sacrifices then you're probably a pretty good person; even addition would be a great thing. In Isaiah 1:11, God's not really happy with that. His question is, "Why are you multiplying sacrifices? Just because you give Me more money or whatever..." People say, "I got all this stuff for you God." As Matthew so aptly puts it, "But you didn't do what I said." I think that a lot of people like to do busy work and work that looks magnificent and grandiose and maybe in some cases, even altruistic, kind, and benevolent, but God says, "Do what I tell you to do." That's a whole different way of living. More specifically, it is that which seeks to please God. If in fact you're just jumping through hoops or doing what you think is necessary, then that's going to eventually show because it's the blessings of the Lord that make rich. Man looks at the outward appearance, but God sees the heart.

So, as you look in Isaiah 1, there's an interesting statement in verse 5, "The whole head is sick." So, that would tell us that somebody's not thinking right. As you go on down within the passage, it's very clear that they're multiplying sacrifices, and they appear before God. Obviously, at the times that they should. They're bringing offerings that have solemn assemblies. People can look very religious because solemn assemblies are where you look really "holy." Yet, even in the fact that they spread their hands out in prayer to the Lord, God's not

going to listen (Isaiah 1:15). The problem is that they continue to do the wrong thing. More specifically, they're not doing what God tells them to do. So, His statement to them in verse 18 is "Come now, and let us reason together." All the way through, he begins to talk about their relationship with Him.

By the time we come to chapter 5, we can just see how upside-down everything is by the statement in verse 20, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil." We've oftentimes come to this passage just to show how upside-down people can be in spite of the fact that they're doing all those things that seem to be very religious; here again, perhaps even magnanimous or "kind." The bottom line is that they're not doing what God told them to do. So, the result of that was disorder; things were in disarray. You see the same thing being portrayed in the book of Jeremiah. It's not enough that you're going through the motions and doing things that look righteous.

Titus begins to talk about the knowledge of godliness, but he's virtually saying that their deeds actually deny it. They're not doing what God tells them. Scripture is telling us that there needs to be a right order. Now, the question is whose order? In other words, who decides what "right" is? Do you often hear that debate out there in the world? "So, who says what's right?" There you have the agnostics debating with you. Well, Titus starts off with God. That's why our Bible starts off with, "In the beginning God..." because that establishes the right order. It not only establishes the right order, but the right paragon. It gives us the standards. So, Paul will start off saying that the standard is truth, but it's God's truth. Every man has that which he perceives to be right in his own eyes, and he would maybe even define it as truth. Nevertheless, there's only one truth. It's not unarguable, undebatable, and it's immutable; it never changes. Truth never changes. If it's true, it's true all the time. So, he establishes that and what's also interesting is he puts this tag, "according to godliness." In other words, people declare that they know what's right and best. So, they raise and elevate these standards and people hop on a bandwagon and their perception is "I think we're following truth."

Let me give you an example. Do you remember the pledge of allegiance that we used to say when we were in school? I don't think kids say that anymore, but "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. And to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God..." It just doesn't feel like that, does it? "...indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." Unfortunately, the nation that we're in, though of all the nations of the world, I'm so thankful I'm here, is just not under God. What has taken place is that our nation really wasn't necessarily founded under God; it was founded under the desire for freedom. So, freedom became the standard; not godliness. Well, when you hear that, the perception is that's the standard we need to go for because "that's the truth." The only problem with putting freedom as the standard is that everybody has their own personal freedom that they'll fight for. If righteousness is taken out of the mix because the standard that they're going by is freedom, then it's the right to do whatever they want to do; which not only brings chaos but brings great hurt to other people.

If you'll look with me in Galatians 5, it says this in verse 1, "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm..." Now, the point of the matter is that Christ sets us free, but it is Christ that we follow. He is the pattern, the paragon, and the example. As Ephesians 5 says, "be imitators of God" and walk in love just as Christ. So, we know what the pattern is, but if you take out that pattern and just put "freedom," it was for freedom that we pursue, then you have the wrong standard and that's going to bring chaos. Let me show you how. Drop on down to verse 13,

"For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."

Verse 15, "But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another."

That's where freedom takes you. So, if you start off with the wrong standards, then you're going to have chaos. It can look good, and you can say that it's "under God," but it doesn't matter if it's not according to God.

When you look at the very beginning of Titus, he starts off in that particular way. The way he writes is "Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness." There's the standard. So, he starts off right away with that. Not only does he do that, but he reveals that he's a bond-servant of God, and he's saying that you need to surrender your will to His. So, if we're going to get things right, we can't think in terms of "that's your opinion" and "that's my opinion" and everybody has their own opinion. We become bondservants of Christ, and we just want His divine truth that's according to godliness. Now, once again, I just want to emphasize that godliness, "*eusebeia*" literally means "good reverence" if you were to break down the word. So, he's saying that you and I do what God tells us to do because we see God in a reverential way. If you exalt man, you'll clearly do what he wants you to do. So, godliness is about how you see God. If you see Him as the one who's in charge then you become, as Paul would say, "a bond-servant of Christ." So, it starts off that way and Paul wants to clarify it within the passage. He also wants the people to realize that God has chosen them to be examples and messengers of this divine truth. Here again, the standards have to be there in order for them to pursue the right things; otherwise, you're going to be pursuing the wrong things. The book of Judges is virtually the United States of America; every man doing what is right in his own eyes. "It's my right to do whatever even if it kills an unborn child." So, the heart of man is deceitful, desperately sick. "The head is sick," as Isaiah will say, and they call "good evil and evil good" under the guise of "one Nation under God."

Titus 1:16 says, "They profess to know God..." So, the Cretans aren't denying the reality of God. This isn't necessarily a debate about the existence of God. This is a debate about how I define Him and if in fact I'm going to be genuine about this relationship.

So, it says this, “They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.”

If in fact it starts off with the right standards which begins with a sense of reverence to God, “we’re going to do it His way not ours;” then that’s a good start. However, if you have any other agenda, there’s always going to be a hole that’s going to distort and before long it’s going to go away. Even if you say, “Benevolence is our standard,” or altruism, kindness and generosity. How many lives have been destroyed under the standard of compassion and kindness? How many people have done so many destructive things under that title; whether it be enabling or something else? Anything less than God’s standards is going to bring chaos. Oftentimes it doesn’t look bad, it actually looks good, but if there’s no reverence to God, then it’s what is called ungodly. Now, ungodly is basically the same word except with an “a”, that is a negative in front of it, “*asebēs*” which means without reverence. So, if you want to know the difference between godly and ungodly, godly means good reverence and ungodly means without reverence to God. So, he begins establishing that. As we look at the passage, here again, we’re making things right. So, we’re getting the right standard and the right mindset. I know that Satan started off this way in the garden, he kind of throws that monkey wrench in the whole thing and says, “I think God’s out to get you and He’s going to do some bad stuff for you.” Why is it that people won’t dedicate their lives to God? They’re afraid and they’re thinking “He’s going to take advantage of my good nature.” And “How wonderful I am. How mean and cruel God is.”

The point of the very beginning is he wants to convey to them,

(Titus 1:2) “in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.”

Once again, the difference between man and God is that man lies, and God doesn’t.

(Titus 1:3) “but at the proper time manifested, even His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior,

(Titus 1:4) To Titus, my true child in a common faith:”

Watch the two words, “Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.”

What is his point? Well, to me, you have to get the right mindset; that is to say, you can’t ever think for one moment that God is doing anything that will in anyway not fit into the category of “grace and peace.” You read it in the epistles almost all the time, “grace and peace to you.” Why is that true? It’s because everything God does for us is in that category. Now, if for a nanosecond we begin to think “God’s not being gracious here” or “this is going to be unfulfilling; it will not bring wholeness or completion into my life;” that’s why you go to something else and pursue other things. When you do that, your perception is that God isn’t enough. Then, at that moment, your mindset is wrong. When your mindset is wrong, then guess what happens; chaos and mayhem, and all kinds of anxiety. Why is that? Well, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee...” (Isaiah 26:3) because, why? You

actually trust Him. Trust Him for what? That everything He's going to give you will be because of His gracious lovingkindness towards you and will ultimately bring peace, fulfillment, and wholeness. Do you believe that? That's the right mindset. So, he's establishing that at the very beginning.

He also establishes that you have to have the right leaders. Which means that the people you want to put in charge; he uses the words "elders" and "stewards."

(1 Corinthians 4:2) "it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy."

He also uses the word "overseer." So, when you think of elders, you should be thinking about somebody that has experience. Now, I have found to be true throughout Scripture that it doesn't always mean somebody old. It means that they have experience in something. In some cases, you'll see where younger men are called elders. The point is that they have a track record of doing the right thing. Not only do they know what the right thing is, but they've experienced and walked it. So, the right leadership is really defined by those that are maintaining the integrity of God's order in their lives. If you look at the list of the description, if you're going to have leaders then you want them leading you the right way. If they're leading you the wrong way, then you're going to have chaos, mayhem, destruction and anxiety. In fact, one of the statements that is made in verses 10 and 11, "there are many...deceivers... who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families." Where is that coming from? They're all in leadership. People are listening to the wrong people. You need to make sure that the right people are maintaining the order and standards of God. I know people will say, "How do I know who the right leader is?" Well, if he's abiding by the standards of God, he's the right guy. If he's not, then get out of there.

Then, he establishes the right instruction in chapters 1 and 2 of Titus. You have to be teaching the right things. If you're teaching the wrong things, once again, "2+2 is 8", you're going to have problems. You'll have problems when you get a job as a cash register person. Although, they use robots nowadays. So, I need to think of other examples. So, the point is that the instruction has to be done right. Now, what's interesting is the way he displays the whole thing of destruction; that is to say, not only is he talking about the things that need to be taught which obviously are specific as men and women, but he also is talking about the way they are to be taught. "Older men, teach the younger men." You won't find Scripture saying, "Children, teach your parents this." Even if the kids taught the right thing, the order would be teaching them the wrong thing. So, in this, he's really displaying "Men, make sure you submit to that authority. Older men, teach the younger men. Older women, teach the younger women. Yes, there's a gender thing, men, women, and you have specific jobs to teach." He's talking about the divine order of God. People say, "Why do you do that?" It's because God said. We're maintaining the standards of God. We're not maintaining the standards of men. "Well, it just doesn't fit into our way of life." I know. That's why people are in a crazy state. This is why things are all confused. So, you have to have the right instruction. It has to be done in the right way, and it's just a great example of this.

Let me just say this on the right instruction as well, one of the things that he has been repeating over and over again is that interesting word “sensible.” Whether it’s the young women or the young men, “live sensibly”, and it’s the word “*sophron*.” The emphasis seems to be that it is extremely important that you and I pull back the reigns of our selfish impulses. I don’t know if that’s really taught. I think one of the things that is fed is “go for everything that you think you deserve” rather than pulling back in the sense of “maybe this isn’t best for everyone; maybe I’m being selfish in this.” Like I said, “*sōphrōn*” means putting reigns on selfish desires and foolish impulses that would certainly take us in places that would be confusing, hurtful, destructive to not only ourselves, but other people. So, you’re going to see that instruction really emphasizes that within the passage.

Then, as we come down towards the end of chapter 2, you realize that the right motivation has to stir us. Sometimes things that can’t be seen are not necessarily seen as things that are really important. “Well, you’re just talking about motivation. So, what’s the deal about that?” It’s all about getting the job done. Scripture says, “No, motivation is everything.” Because once again, God rewards the heart. So, what’s the motivation that you have? Why do you do what you do? If you look at the passage? It’s very clear that the grace of God is what motivates us. We’ll put it another way, the lovingkindness of God is what motivates us. We talked about this last week, but as we looked in Romans 12 also, as it began to say, “by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice.” What’s the motivation of God? What moves us to do what we do? It’s saying that the mercy, graciousness, lovingkindness of God is what motivates. If anything else motivates you, it’s the wrong motivation. I would say, it will produce unfaithfulness because selfish motivation will have its limitations even in good things. You can only go so far. But if in fact you’re walking in love, love never fails. If in fact it’s the love of God, that is to say that there’s a realization for how much He loved you, that now you give your life. The way that Jesus puts it with His disciples is “Do you want to know why you forgive people? It’s because I forgave you.” “In this is love...” John will say in 1 John 4:10, “not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

Scripture tells us that is a motivation and what moves us. It’s the love of Christ that constrains me to do what I do. If you’re moved by anything else, it’s going to produce chaos. You’re going to fail. You’re going to quit. You’re going to react negatively. People will get on your nerves. You’ll start off being the nicest person in the world, and five hours down the road, “I can’t take this person anymore!” Probably with good reason, but it’s not the power of God that’s maintaining you. The phrase that should go through your head is “What wouldn’t I do for Him?” If you’re doing the right thing at that moment, then the only motivation that will sustain that right thing is, “What wouldn’t I do for Him?” It’s that love for Christ that moves us.

It says this in Titus 2:11, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men.”

Why is he establishing that? It is the motivating power that moves us to do that. That’s why he says in the next verse, “instructing us to deny ungodliness.” What brings me to a point where I feel reverence for God? Remember what ungodliness is? Without reverence for God. So, what

is it that draws me to reverence? Why is it that I have this passionate affection for Him? What will it do? It will keep you from going the wrong way. It will keep you from doing the wrong thing, and it will sustain you through the most difficult of times. Do you remember what the word “instructs” meant? Discipline. It actually goes into the realm of beating. In fact, in some cases, this particular word “*paideuō*” refers to beating. The point is that His love beats me into submission. I’ll put it another way, it is so convicting that I am broken when I don’t do it. It instructs me to do this. Why is it that I would forsake my own worldly desires according to verse 12? How is it that I would pull the reins on my selfish pursuits, immediate gratifications, and foolish impulses? What would make me do that? Here again, it’s the grace of God that instructs me. How many times have you felt like doing something wrong and you went into the pursuit of doing the wrong thing, and then the Spirit of God took you to a course in which you felt grieved that you were even thinking that way? Maybe you guys don’t seek the wrong thing, but I’ve had many of those moments. I remember as a teenager, I was actually getting very frustrated because God wouldn’t let me do certain things. I knew they were wrong, “but please just let me do this one bad thing.” It’s just the grace of God that does that. So, what you have is really just the right motivation.

All the way through, he talks about “Why are you pulling back yourself?”

(Titus 1:5) “be sensible...”

That’s the pulling back, right? “*Sōphrōn.*”

“...pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands...”

So, you’re pulling back your “I don’t want to listen to him. I don’t want to do what he tells me to do. I’ve got things to do like shopping.” So, “I’ve got things to buy, places to go.”

Why do you want to submit to your husband? Watch the end of verse 5.

“...so that the word of God will not be dishonored.”

The only thing you can think of is “I wouldn’t want to bring shame to Him. I wouldn’t want to dishonor His word.” So, what’s your motivating factor? It’s not because your husband is so great. He might be. Probably not. That’s not the reason. The reason is that you don’t want to bring dishonor to God.

(Titus 2:6) “Likewise, I urge the young men to be sensible”

Why would the men pull back the reins, right?

(Titus 2:7) “in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine...”

It seems like the same thing.

So that, in verse 8, they would have nothing bad to say about us.

Watch verse 10, “not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.”

What are they thinking about? Reverence. It's godliness saying, “I don't want to hurt Him.” As Ephesians 4:31 would say, why would you want to grieve the Spirit of God? If that's not your motivation, you'll never be sustained in your doing good. That's why he repeats it over and over again. That's our desire.

Now, we come into the passage that we're going to be looking at tonight, Titus 2:13-14. He's going to be talking about how in order for things to be right, you have to have the right expectation. In this particular passage, that expectation is referred to in the word “hope.” So, it says in verse 13, “looking for the blessed hope.” The word “hope” means confident expectation. Why is expectation about the right things so necessary to keep us on the right track? Why do you have to have good expectations in order for you to do the right thing? How is it that it keeps and maintains you?

There's an interesting passage in the Old Testament that talks about the expectations of the wicked. If you turn there with me, I'll show you a couple of them. One in particular in Proverbs 10. I've oftentimes thought about this too because in the world in which we live, I find that it's very easy to find myself being very cynical and skeptical about everything. Before long, you can probably rationalize your skeptical nature. With cynicism you are kind of going into maybe a darker area, but then how interesting it just goes into criticism. It doesn't seem to stop at thinking “you can't trust anybody;” it goes into the realm of then beginning to point out why everything that you see is horrible. When you begin to think that way, before long, you begin to think in a way of the future is just horrible. Darkness, doom, and depression await you. So, when you look in Proverbs 10:24, it reads this way, “What the wicked fears will come upon him...” Once again, I just want to emphasize that “wicked” are the people that don't reverence God. That's fundamentally the definition of wicked. Wicked are not always identifiable outwardly, but those that don't hold a reverence for God in their hearts are the wicked. If you find yourself looking to the future and perceiving bad, that's a wicked heart. God has chosen you to receive grace and peace, and everything that He's doing for you is in that category. You are agents of this, and you're going to be an example and proclaimers of this in everything that you do. The wicked fear things and say, “I just knew it was going to be a bad day.” Why do you think it came through? Some people will say it's a Pygmalion effect. I do think there's something to that in the sense of what you expect will come upon you, but it goes more into the fact that you doubted God and have literally brought evil upon yourself. “Pastor Gary, you're saying that what I think actually has a bearing on what happens to me?” Yeah. It does. I'll show you a number of passages that make reference to that, but if you'll just finish out the verse with me, “... But the desire of the righteous will be granted.” Let me just emphasize the word “desire” here, *“ta'avâ”* dealing with the longings that you have. “Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart.” (Psalm 37:4)

So, we're talking about the longings that you have, the things that you desire. Look, they have to be good things obviously, but God will grant them. The word "*nāṭan*" means to give, grant or bestow. This is God giving you something. Why? Because you were righteous. Now, how is righteous defined? Righteous is defined in the Proverbs and Psalms as those who reverence God, do His will, and trust in Him. It's not somebody that's perfect. David will pray a prayer such as "You know I'm righteous." Well, we know that David is not righteous, but because he trusts in God and believes in Him in every aspect, and he comes to Him and humbles himself before Him then he's declared righteous just like Abraham; he was declared righteous because of his faith. It was imputed to him as righteousness. So, that's what we're talking about because Scripture will say that there's none righteous, no not one, but we're talking about the righteousness of somebody that fears God. When you fear God and you trust Him, and you actually believe that God desires to give you good things, He will grant you good things.

There's a passage in Isaiah 66:4 where God says,

"...And will bring on them what they dread. Because...I spoke, but they did not listen..."

Now, when God is speaking to you, one of the things that He's saying very clear is "Trust in Me. When you have a problem, come to Me, and I will answer you. I'll show you great and mighty things, but come to Me."

(Proverbs 3:5) "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding."

It all comes back to putting your trust in Him, coming to Him, longing for Him, loving Him, delighting yourself in Him. When that's done, God grants things. So, the expectations of the righteous are always good. Why? Because they're trusting in God to do good. They trust God to do exactly what He said He would do. What is that? Good for them.

I'll show you a passage, if you'll turn with me to Psalm. Here again, it has become one of my many favorite verses, Psalm 33:18. It reads this way, "Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him..."

That would be a reverence, right?

"... On those who hope for His lovingkindness."

That's interesting because it starts off with a sense of reverence. Why would you reverence God? Where does this affection come from? I'm in awe over His lovingkindness towards me, and I would be afraid to be out of His love. You go, "I don't know. What do you mean 'afraid'?" I'd be afraid to lose my wife's love. So, there is a fear of not being in the presence of God. It's talking about the fact that we live in this realm of "I don't want to be without Him" because I know that everything He does for me is full of lovingkindness, grace and peace.

(Psalm 33:19) "To deliver their soul from death And to keep them alive in famine."

“I trust You for everything.” Not only to save my life, but to keep my life.

(Psalm 33:20) “Our soul waits for the LORD;
He is our help and our shield.

(Psalm 33:21) For our heart rejoices in Him,
Because we trust in His holy name.

(Psalm 33:22) Let Your lovingkindness, O LORD, be upon us,
According as we have hoped in You.”

What the wicked fear will come upon them, and what we hope will come upon us.

Now, the problem is that we read things like tea leaves and things that have happened to us, and we go, “This happened to me. I don’t like that. Oh, it’s going to get worse.” Sure enough, it does, but it doesn’t get worse because God doesn’t desire to give us good. Why should He give us good if we aren’t going to trust in Him? Now certainly, He causes the sun to shine on the righteous and the unrighteous, there’s no doubt about that, but as Jeremiah so aptly puts it, “your sins have withheld good from you.” What is the greatest sin that you and I could ever commit? Not believing that God is good because once you believe God is good, everything else you’ll do willingly. If God were to tell you, “Jump off the cliff,” if you really believed it was something good that God was telling you, you would jump off the cliff. There wouldn’t be anything that you wouldn’t do because God is good. So, the crime is not believing God is good. That’s why you go back to the garden, “Has God said? Isn’t He really trying to hurt you?” What are you believing? That He’s not good. See, that’s the reason we sin. “I’m better than God. I know what’s best for me. I know what makes me feel good. I know what makes me happy. So, I’m going to do that and therefore I’ll be happy.” It’s not going to work.

Ecclesiastes 7 is a great chapter because one of the things it’s doing for us is revealing that the things that we think are bad times are really beneficial times. The times that we think are beneficial really aren’t so great after all. Now, Scripture isn’t going to tell you that having a good time is a bad thing, but it is going to tell you that when people are just into having a good time, it makes them very superficial, and that is not beneficial. So, he’ll say “better is the house of mourning than a house of feasting” (Ecclesiastes 7:2) because where there’s all this laughter, people aren’t thinking. In the house of mourning, people are very deep in their thinking. So, here again, he begins to talk about things that are valuable that you wouldn’t necessarily perceive as valuable. This is why he says in Ecclesiastes 7:10,

“Do not say, ‘Why is it that the former days were better than these?’
For it is not from wisdom that you ask about this.”

We would probably put in the phrase, “The good ole days.” “Oh, for the good ole days” and he goes, “You’re not being wise when you say that.” Because you’re saying that God is not giving you good today, and that’s not true. Everything that God is doing for you is good; “Grace and peace to you.” So, he goes on, and he begins to show us the values of these things. It

oftentimes has jumped off the page to me when he says, "Do not be excessively righteous." Don't you like that? I like the phrase. Actually, I've never hit that point yet, but there are times when I thought I was there which probably wasn't a good idea either.

(Ecclesiastes 7:16) "Do not be excessively righteous and do not be overly wise..."

It goes on and says also, "Do not be excessively wicked."

It almost seems like he wants us to kind of walk the middle of the road, and that's not what he's talking about. Let's let him say it in his own words, verse 18,

"It is good that you grasp one thing and also not let go of the other; for the one who fears God comes forth with both of them."

Now, the context is actually giving us what he's talking about. He seems to be talking about that it's good for you to grasp; seizing something or going after something. What is the thing that you need to go after? Well, you need to go after righteousness and wisdom. There's no doubt about it; you need to go after that, but you can't let go of and see as not valuable things that are going on around you that are wicked and foolish. You go, "Wait a minute Pastor Gary, wickedness and foolishness?" No, no. God is teaching you things. If there are things that are coming into your life and God is only bringing that which is beneficial to you, then don't throw things out. I was sharing this with Robert before the service, but I have found that at a number of the places that Connie and I were, we were being taught what not to do. If you'll thank God for those things, when you begin to see wickedness playing out in front of you, the destruction, hurt and pain, and you go, "Thank You." Because in so many cases, you see the beginnings of certain things, and you say, "That looks innocent. It looks innocuous. It doesn't look like it's going to hurt anybody," but I've been able to see it go all the way to fruition, and you don't even want to start there. If you throw out that moment, and you say, "That was the worst moment of my life" and you begin to talk about how horrible it was that God put you through that, you discarded a truth that He wanted you to hold onto. Grasp for the right things, but God is also teaching you through these other things. Don't let them slip through your fingers. There's value here because God is causing all things to work together for good, and even the tribulations and the hardships of your life. Consider it all joy because He's doing good in your life. Pain and sorrow and sickness, yeah, it doesn't make for something that we would call a "great day," but it may just be the greatest day of your whole life. Here again, before long, certain things that God is bringing into our life we then begin to think, "Well then, horrible things await me," but you're not walking in the expectations of His goodness. If you do that, only good will come out of this and good will come out of the most difficult of times.

Psalm 130 has often been a Psalm of comfort in this regard.

(Psalm 130:1) "Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD."

(Psalm 130:2) Lord, hear my voice!

Let Your ears be attentive

To the voice of my supplications.

(Psalm 130:3) If You, LORD, should mark iniquities,

O Lord, who could stand?

(Psalm 130:4) But there is forgiveness with You,

That You may be feared.”

Once again, why do we fear God? We're in awe of His lovingkindness. I wouldn't want to be without it, would you? Without God there is no forgiveness. Have you noticed that the world is not too forgiving? When I run to Him, there's forgiveness with Him. He takes the burdens off my shoulders and my chest.

(Psalm 130:5) “I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, And in His word do I hope.”

What are we hoping in? The way He does things. Once again, when reading a passage like Ecclesiastes 7, it helps us to rethink what good is as we're going through difficult times and times of mourning.

(Psalm 130:6) “My soul waits for the Lord

More than the watchmen for the morning;

Indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning.

(Psalm 130:7) O Israel, hope in the LORD...”

Why would you hope in the Lord according to this verse? His loving kindness and abundant redemption. For you to think that God has anything but grace and peace for you is just chaotic thinking and it's going to put you in a tailspin, pursue the wrong things, and think that you're offtrack because certain things are happening that you don't like. If you would stop measuring good according to how you perceive it, and just believe that God is doing good today, then He will grant you those desires that you have. God's not trying to withhold things from us. He's going to bring good into our lives. I think chaos really comes about when we're trying to pursue all the things when we can easily define them as good, and they might even be good, but we're pursuing them our way. Wow is that chaotic because we don't know the pathway to good. A lot of the things that I would pursue would just make me a very selfish person in the end result. Now, God wants to give me those same things, but He wants me to be unselfish when He gives them to me. So, He's going to take me on this journey to make me receptive and to make me appropriate to the things that He gives me; so that I would use them in an appropriate way as well as enjoy them in a greater way. You could have a lot of wonderful things and still not have any joy or happiness. So, God is taking you into the realm of grace and peace. So, the Lord is doing a great work.

Closing prayer:

Lord, thank You for Your word and how You begin to direct us into these things. Clearly, as we begin to read in this book of Titus, You want us to stay out of that realm of chaos and disorder. There is that truth that is divine. Lord, we want to stay there with You. We believe with all of our might that You're the Redeemer. We believe with all of our might that You are the one that bestows good upon us; that Your lovingkindness goes beyond what we could even imagine. It is because of that we trust in You. How wonderful it is that You give to Your beloved even in his sleep. We give You thanks in Your name. Amen.