

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 28 Aug 2022
Sermon Title : A Trustworthy Saying
Speaker : Rev Eddie Ho
Text : Titus 3:4-7

INTRODUCTION

This letter was written 2000 years ago by Paul to his protégé Titus who was sent to take care of the church in the island of Crete in southern Greece. Titus was facing problems because false teachers there were teaching wrong things about God and leading the people astray. Paul wrote this letter to encourage Titus and to instruct him how to deal with the difficult situation. This letter has 3 chapters:

- Titus 1 – Not only are false teachers dangerous, teachers who do not practise what they preach can also lead people astray.
- Titus 2 – Exhortation to do good works.
- Titus 3 – Need for sound doctrine (focus for today).

Sound doctrine is – the correct teaching based on the truth of God
– the correct knowledge of God
– the correct understanding of God and His purpose for us.

Which comes first – Sound doctrine or good works? Is it necessary to have sound doctrine before we are able to do good works?

Historical evidence tells us that good works have been evident across every culture and religion, throughout the history in all civilisations, independent of Christianity. Christianity is not the only religion to teach goodness and kindness. Good works are not unique to Christians who have a good understanding of God. Many non-Christians have good works. Hence it is not necessary to have a good understanding of God to do good works.

But Titus 3:8 says: “Trustworthy is the saying and I want you to insist emphatically on these things in order that those who have believed in God might be intent on devoting themselves to good works. These are good and profitable for people.”

“In order that” or “so that” are both conjunctions which join two clauses in a sentence. We do action ‘A’ “in order that” or “so that” we can fulfil ‘B’. E.g. I open the window in order that/so that I can get fresh air.

- The action in Titus 3:8 is ‘insist emphatically’ which means to put a lot of weight or stress heavily on something. We are to insist emphatically on ‘a trustworthy

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saying' so that those who believe in God (i.e. Christians) might 'devote themselves to good works'.

- Verses 4-7 elaborate on what this trustworthy saying is. The 'trustworthy saying' here is a creed which is a statement of truth (or a doctrinal statement) about God and gives us an understanding of who He is. The early Christians recited this creed regularly to affirm their understanding of God.

Hence when confronted with the question which comes first – good works or doctrine, Titus 3:8 says this: “A trustworthy saying” (vv.4-7) or sound doctrine causes us to devote ourselves to good works.

Salvation does not depend on good works

Titus 3:4-7: “When the goodness and philanthropy of God our Saviour appeared, not out of works of righteousness that we did but in accordance with His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He richly poured out for us through Jesus Christ our Saviour in order that having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs according to (the) hope of eternal life.”

- Verses 4-5 of the creed specifically says salvation does not depend on good works but on the mercy of God. Any person is capable of doing good works because we are all created in the image of God and can exhibit some of God's goodness.

Besides, every human being also knows the difference between good and evil. (Gen 3:5-6)

- However, good works does not mean all is well inside just as a very fit person who could do a good workout may have cancer cells in his body. Salvation is not dependent on what good works we do but on the condition of our souls – whether we are cleansed of our sins or not. Just as a good workout cannot get rid of cancer cells, no amount of good works can cleanse us. Titus 3:5 tells us that it is by God's mercy that He saved us through washing us clean with the blood of Jesus.

Jesus said in Matthew 9:12 that it is not the healthy but the sick who need a doctor. As the doctor of our souls, Jesus chose to heal, cleanse and to save us. This is called the doctrine of salvation.

Sound doctrines help us realize who God really is

We cannot love someone unless we know the person. So sound doctrine tells us who God is and what He is doing for us.

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- Who He is
When comparing ourselves with God, we see an infinite distance between His power and our weakness, His goodness and our impurity, His faithful nature and our sinfulness. We are humbled and awestruck as we compare how big and magnificent He is and realize how small and insignificant we are.
- What He is doing for us
Despite the infinite distance between Almighty God and us, God went to great lengths to travel that infinite distance for our sake. God came to earth as a helpless baby who grew up to be a sinless man. That sinless man willingly let Himself be crucified on the cross and die for our sins. God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, stooped down to be with us. He gave Himself to cleanse us and redeem us.
- What He wants us to be
God not only cleanses, heals and redeems us, He wants us to be His heirs. (Titus 3:7) This speaks volumes of God's love for us. He is great in power and glory, but He does not treat us as His slaves but as His children. (Galatians 4:7) He showered us with blessings and an eternal inheritance based on the worthiness of Christ Himself. Sound doctrine leads us to worship and love the Almighty God because it tells us how great He is.

Sound doctrines cause us to do good works

1 John 4:8 says to know God is to know love and to equip yourself to act in love. God shows His love to us and expects us to show love to others. As God's heirs, we are not just to inherit His Kingdom but also His character – to love what He loves. In other words, to be like Him.

Imagine being in a road accident caused by the recklessness of a cyclist who collides with and dents your car but is also injured. Sound doctrine tells us that the cyclist, no matter how reckless, is made in the image of God. Understanding the doctrine correctly, you will act accordingly and extend care to a fellow human being, even though you are in the right. This also applies to other situations in life, like our interactions with people who hold different views from us. Sometimes it is ok to lose the argument but earn the respect of the opponent, then continue to show them God's truth and love.

This is what Jesus did. Jesus did not come into a world that loved Him or agreed with Him. He came into a world that hated and opposed Him. Jesus died for us while we were still sinners and His enemies. (Romans 5:7-8)

Sound doctrine (Titus 3:7) tells us we are to be God's heir, i.e. God wants us to be like Him.

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CONCLUSION

We cannot work our way to salvation. We need to put our faith in Jesus Christ who washed and renewed us and made us His heirs. He enabled us to know the heart of God and to become like Him. The trustworthy saying/sound doctrine in God's Word reveals who God is, His mercy and infinite love for us. This in turn leads us to love Him and to love others like He does – to good works; to be like Him.

A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk!?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2. Appoint someone to read Titus 3:4-7 slowly.
 - a. How does the trustworthy saying (sound doctrine) in Titus 3:4-7 speak to you?
 - b. What does this sound doctrine lead you to want to do?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 3a. If salvation does not depend on good works, why do Christians do good works?
- 3b. Titus 3:8 says that the trustworthy saying (sound doctrine) causes us to devote ourselves to good works.
- (i) Does your life abound in good works?
 - (ii) How can you continually receive sound doctrine that will cause you to devote yourself to good works?
- 3c. What sound doctrine will help you to love God and others especially the unlovable – e.g. those who are demanding, taking advantage of you or putting you down for having different views from them?
- 4a. What is one challenging situation in your life now, whether at home, in school, at work, in church or in the community, where insisting emphatically on sound doctrine will result in good works lived out by you? (You may refer to Romans 5:7-8, 1 John 4:8, Galatians 4:7 and Matthew 9:12)
- 4b. How can your group members encourage or help you to achieve 4a. above in the following week(s), till your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies, Prayer and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Share your personal testimony of how God helped you cling to sound doctrine you received from His Word when faced with a challenging circumstance.

OR

Give thanks to God for giving you sound doctrine in His Word that causes you to do good works like Jesus and so grow in Christlikeness.

6. With a prayer partner, bring all that have been shared in 3b, 3c, 4a and 4b to God, asking for the Holy Spirit's help to continually seek His trustworthy saying/sound doctrine in His Word that will cause you to devote yourself to good works.

Pray for your group and our church to always cling to God's trustworthy saying even in difficult situations so that as God's heirs we will inherit and live out more of God's character in our interactions with those around us.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. You Hold It All Together – Maverick City https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4t_ROjJyg48
2. In Christ Alone – Brian Littrell <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwyuPvNjhUM>
3. Heart of a Servant – City harvest Church <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yK-gwUzBRbc>

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