

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Healthy In *Agapē*-Love

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“Hold on to the pattern of healthy words that you heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit the One indwelling in us.” 2 Timothy 1:13

“But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for healthy teaching. ² Older men are to be clear-headed, honorable, sound-minded, healthy in faith, in *agapē*-love, in perseverance. ³ Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, ⁴ so that they may soundly-encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵ to be sound-minded, pure, workers at home, good, arranging themselves under their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. ⁶ Likewise urge the young men to be sound-minded; ⁷ in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, in the teaching, incorruptible, dignified, ⁸ sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.” Titus 2:1-8

Have you ever thought of “love” in terms of “health” or “soundness”? The NT indicates that we are to bring about health or wholeness in things like “doctrine”, “faith”, “*agapē*-love”, and even “patient-endurance”. Of course, this would mean that it is also possible to be “unsound” or “unhealthy” in these areas. **We are to help each other grow into the maturity that God intends for us in Christ.**

There are two related words which are translated as “sound” or “healthy” in the NT. The Greek adjective, *hugiēs* (ὕγιης) occurs eleven times (Matt. 12:13; 15:31; Mk. 5:34; Jn. 5:6,9,11,14,15; 7:23; Acts 4:10; Tit. 2:8). It refers to physical, mental and spiritual health. It refers to being balanced, well-functioning and ordered throughout; wholesome and hearty. The first ten occurrences it is used *literally*, to refer to physical health, usually in reference to a healing. In Titus 2:8, it is used *metaphorically* for “healthy or sound speech”. The related verb is *hugiainō* (ὕγιαίνω). It occurs twelve times (Lk. 5:31; 7:10; 15:27; 1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3; Tit. 1:9, 13; 2:1f; 3 Jn. 1:2). Of these, the first three occurrences, and the last, are about physical health, while the other times the apostle Paul uses this word metaphorically. They are almost all participles, a form of the word that describes a state of being, translated as an “-ing” form, “...being sound or healthy”. These participles are functioning as adjectives in their contexts. For example, in 1 Timothy 1:10, most versions translate the phrase at the end of the verse as “to sound teaching”, but it is actually “to the being-sound teaching”. **Of the things described as “being-sound” or “being-healthy”, we have teaching** (4x – 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Tit. 1:9; 2:1); **words** (3x – 1 Tim. 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; Tit. 2:8); **and, “faith, love and patience”** (Tit. 2:2). In addition, in Titus 2, we have several examples of a compound word, translated as “sound-minded” which adds to the flavor of health and wholeness described in this passage. This word occurs 4 times in these verses (Tit. 2:2,4,5,6).

In 2 Timothy 1:13, Paul admonished Timothy to hold fast to the pattern, outline or model of the sound words which he had heard from Paul. There are *healthy, beneficial things* to talk about and teach, and there are *unhealthy, destructive things* that a person may decide to talk about. Throughout the pastoral epistles, Paul helps delineate the kinds of things to *avoid* talking about, because *they introduce spiritual distraction, confusion and disagreements*. They are counter-productive. In fact, they can be so destructive that Paul instructs these church leaders to correct and silence those who wish to introduce such unhealthy, unsubstantiated things into the meetings or fellowships of which they are a part. **They are not to pay attention to myths, genealogies, speculations, conspiracy theories or anything else that would detract from the main focus** (1 Tim. 1:3,4), which was furthering the responsible stewardship they were given by God. They were even to silence those who would try to teach the OT scriptures, if they were leading people into confusion, or were not understanding accurately what the revelation of God was really about (1 Tim. 1:6-11). Timothy, Titus, and anyone in leadership, ...in fact, **any of us, has a responsibility to keep the teachings and discussions we have with others centered in the clear, easily demonstrable message of the scriptures.** Our words and discussions are not to be spurious, or fruitless. We are to speak things that edify one another, ...things that encourage and build each other up (1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 4:29; Col. 3:16,17). The *main* thing is to keep the main *thing* the *main thing*. Paul gives us some clear, sound direction. **We are to keep ourselves focused on being stewards of God’s will.** A steward carries out the business of his or her master. Paul then tells us that **“the goal, focus or end of my instruction is *agapē*-love, out from a pure heart, a good conscience, and an unhypocritical faith”** (1 Tim. 1:5). **This is a powerful, clear touch-stone for helping us stay on track.**

As you work through the pastoral epistles, you can appreciate how well Paul directs these younger men to keep their focus, ...and to keep their people moving toward what is healthy, **and to avoid the pitfalls that could divert them.** We are to *avoid wrath and dissension* (1 Tim. 2:8), and appoint leaders who are sound in faith and character (1 Tim 3). *Warn of the danger of being pulled away by false doctrine*, inspired by demons, characterized by unhealthy

asceticism, emphasizing celibacy and abstaining from certain foods (4:1-6). *Have nothing to do with commonly-held myths, but train yourself to be well-devoted toward God* (4:7). Be an example. **Give attention to the reading, teaching and encouraging others with the scripture, and do not neglect the development and use of your spiritual gifts** (4:12-16). Again, in chapter 6, Paul states that *those who advocate other doctrine*, and are not in agreement with healthy words are spiritually-sick and get people off track, *produce strife and division*. Notice again, controversial questions, and disputes about words are at the bottom of this. Often, these types of people try to advocate a “get-rich” version of Christianity, which Paul soundly decries. *Again, it is a distraction*. Those who follow such teachings experience harm and often wander away. **He counsels Timothy to fight for the true faith, and flee these teachings and temptations**.

These are just some examples from 1 Timothy. If you were to continue on through 2 Timothy, you will see the same things. **There is a need to stand strong in the face of opposition, ...the dangers of false doctrine and false teachers**. *We are to avoid arguing, which is useless, and can bring us to ruin* (again, pulling us out of abiding in the Holy Spirit, and enticing us into fleshly reasoning and argumentation – 2 Tim 2:14). *We are to avoid common worldly and empty chatter, because even that can lead us away into an unhealthy focus*, and such talk can spread through the gathering of believers like gangrene (2 Tim. 2:16,17). **Instead, we are to focus on studying the Word of God, and learning to correctly interpret it** (2:15). **We are to flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, agapē-love and peace** (2:22). Again, *we are not to quarrel*, but simply gently correct those in opposition, praying that God will bring them to a change of mind (2:24-26). Difficult times will come when people will be very self-centered, and will only have an outward show of devotion toward God, but who refuse its effective power to change them. *We are to avoid such people* (3:1-9). Instead, **we are to continue in what the scriptures teach, so that we might be trained by them and become equipped for the work God has for us** (3:14-17). We are to preach the word, being ready to correct and refute, with great patience and instruction (4:1,2). The time will come when people will not hold to sound, healthy teaching, but will gather people to themselves who will tell them what they want to hear, and they will turn aside to myths (4:3,4). **Paul exhorts Timothy to stay on target, and fulfill his ministry**.

Titus also has many of the same themes. Paul exhorts him to **appoint elders who are healthy**. They are to be people of good character, not self-willed or easily provoked to anger, **people who not only know the truth, but also are walking it out in their lives**. **They need to be grounded in healthy teaching, and able to refute those who contradict**. Why? Because *there will be all sorts of “rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, ...teaching what they should not teach, for the sake of sordid gain”* (Tit. 1:10,11). They must be strongly reprov'd, so that they might become healthy in faith. *The danger again is myths and human religious commandments and traditions that turn people away from the truth*. Those who are defiled by these erroneous teachings will profess to know God, but their actions will clearly show that they do not. As Jesus said, “You will know them by their fruit” (Matt. 7:15-23).

Finally, we come to the passage for today: Titus 2:1-8. One of the things that really stands out about this passage is the emphasis on health, soundness, ...that well-balanced and functional characteristic we would expect from someone who is walking with God. Notice that **there are seven times in these eight verses where health or soundness occurs**. Obviously, **this is not an accident; this is by design**. This is the result of “speaking the things which are fitting with healthy-teaching.” More than that, however, **it is a reflection of the discipleship effectiveness that Paul expects to be at work within this community of believers**. There is to be a clear teaching about what healthy looks like, where it comes from, and a persistent encouragement to bring it out in one another’s lives. **Note that every person in the group is included**: old men, old women, young women and young men. **All are expected to be able to grow and mature in this kind of spiritual health**. Everyone is expected to be “sound-minded”. One of the nuggets here is that this word is not just about one’s *mental awareness*, but on the *content and focus of one’s thoughts*. In other words, a **“sound-minded person” is thinking of things that are healthy, wholesome, well-balanced and functional**. When you look back on what we saw in our survey of 1 and 2 Timothy, we saw that so much was about being distracted, misled or diverted in mind. **It is not just about the content of what is in the mind, it is about the focus. BUT, the focus and the content are related**. The danger of false teaching, genealogies, speculative notions, conspiracy theories, lust, greed, or what have you is NOT just that they are erroneous. **It is that these things capture your attention, which diverts your thinking process and your present consciousness. What does healthy-mindedness look like, in terms of our faith?** It would be a mindset and conscious focus on communion with God throughout our day. **It is a well-balanced and functional inclusion of God into all of our experiences and thoughts**. Can you see why it is so important to NOT have these other distractions, arguments, curiosities, debates, etc. They simply pull our attention off of God’s activity in our lives. What about “healthy in *agapē-love*”? **If agapē is the out-working of a life filled with the Holy Spirit, prompted by God and responded to by our conscious obedience, then healthy-love comes out of a healthy-faith worked out through a healthy-enduring focus on God in our walk**.