

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Beneficial Beliefs For 2024

by Dan Trygg

“But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.”

Titus 2:1

“Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be compliant, to be ready for every good deed, ² to defame no one, to be unquarrelsome, gentle-and-yielding, demonstrating every consideration toward all people. ³ For we also once were unperceptive ourselves, uncooperative, being-led- astray, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our lives in malice (sickness/depravity) and envy, hateful (detestable), hating one another. ⁴ But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for humankind appeared, ⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. ⁸ This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to strongly-affirm, in order that those who have believed God will be thinking to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for people. ⁹ But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and contentions and legal quarrels, for they are unprofitable and worthless.”

Titus 3:1-9

The apostle Paul wrote the Pastoral Epistles to Timothy and Titus, who were to appoint leaders and oversee the quality of the spirituality of churches in Asia and Crete. One of the noticeable vocabulary words he used in these three letters is the word translated as “sound”. This word occurs twelve times in the NT. Four times, it is clearly referring to physical health (Lk. 5:31; 7:10; 15:27; 3 Jn. 1:2). The other eight occurrences are in these letters to Timothy and Titus (1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3; Tit. 1:9,13; 2:1,2). All of *these instances have to do with “healthy teaching”, “sound words”, or “heartly faith”*. In Titus 1:9, an overseer (referred to as “bishop” in some translations) was not only to have a good and reputable character, but was also to be able to encourage people in healthy or sound teaching, as well as to expose and refute those would speak against the truth. *Sound doctrine, or “healthy teaching”, is a crucial part of what will determine the positive and productive spirituality of a community of believers.* Moreover, “correct theology” is not necessarily the same as “sound doctrine”. *Sound doctrine is teaching, instruction, beliefs and practices that will produce the kind of disciples that Jesus wants us to raise up and train.*

There was a “pattern of healthy words” which they were to hold to, things which they had heard from Paul (2 Tim. 1:13). As mentioned above, leaders were expected to “hold fast to the faithful word, in accordance with what they had been taught, in order that they might be able to encourage others in the healthy teaching” (Tit. 1:9). **They were to “speak the things which are suitable for healthy teaching” (Tit. 2:1). I think these passages hark back to the discipleship strategy that we see in the early church, in Acts 2. Verse 44 says that all the ones believing were being “upon the same thing”, that is, they were all involved in the same activities. They were continuing unremittingly in the doctrine that the apostles had taught, meeting together over a meal to share with one another, and devoted to prayer. *They were being instructed, supported, and were seeking God together with others.* All those who were being added to the church were also “upon the same thing” (vs. 47). Paul said to Timothy, “The things you have heard from me, supported by many witnesses, entrust these things to faithful people who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). Paul instructed Timothy to pass along the vision, content and practices for growth handed down from the apostles.**

Christians were expected to be pursuing growth and maturity. Remember, *Jesus had called the apostles not just to “preach the message”, but to “make disciples”*. They were to train others to follow Jesus, grow in Jesus, become like Jesus, and walk like Jesus. *As disciples, they were not just students of information, they were learning to live and act like Christ.* They were called to be “doers of the word, not just hearers” (Jas. 1:22). They were not meeting with others to simply *listen to a message, or to watch others in ministry. They were coming together to learn to do ministry themselves, by the power and leading of the Spirit within them!* A disciple is an apprentice, a practitioner, a trainee. **The expectation was that these followers of Jesus would be devoting themselves to growing in their faith, deepening their walk with Christ, and stepping into areas of service.** “Sound doctrine” will promote healthy discipleship, which will produce people who will become like Jesus in *their* words, actions and attitudes. **This was Paul’s own testimony:** “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has empowered *me*, for He considered *me* faithful, putting *me* into service” (1 Tim. 1:12). In 2 Tim. 3:14, Paul exhorted Timothy to “continue in the things you have learned”. He went on to direct him to the scriptures, which were uniquely inspired by God, and are given to equip us for the work we are called to do. **God will use His word to build us up and lead us into our inheritance, our “allotted portion”, our intended function and place in the ministry of the body of Christ** (2 Tim. 3:16,17; Acts 20:32). *We have a purpose, ...a calling. We have been given spiritual gifts, and the Spirit desires to lead us into productive service for Christ.*

There is a cost to discipleship. Paul used his own life as an example (2 Tim. 2:1-6). He encouraged Timothy (and us!) to “suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No soldier entangles himself in the affairs of

everyday life ('civilian pursuits' – ESV), in order that he may please the one who enlisted him." We are called to be separate, holy, set apart for God, devoted to Christ as our King. That means that His interests and purposes come before anything else. **We must separate ourselves, our interests, our thoughts and focus away from the "civilian pursuits" that surround us in order that we might focus on and be available to serve God.** This is a discipline, ... a sacrifice we make to know and serve Jesus effectively. **Like a disciplined athlete, we cannot cut corners. We must put in the time and effort to grow and train, and then we must serve with integrity.** Paul lived a very disciplined life. He was encouraging Timothy to do the same. In his earlier letter, he said as much, "Discipline yourself toward godliness..." (1 Tim. 4:7,8). If we want a deep, interactive and effective life with God, we need to invest time and do it consistently. **Finally, the one who works hard will get results.** Just as a hardworking farmer will get the first produce, in the same way, those who invest in their walk with Christ will grow quicker than those who do not. This is not a "works righteousness" thing. It is a "faith investment" thing. Those who believe and value God will invest.

What are we to be looking for? What does "sound doctrine" produce? As you read through these letters, what stands out is that those who are effectively following Christ will live righteously, sensibly and with good devotion toward Him. They will be above reproach, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, gentle, peaceable, and free from the love of money. They have good relationships with their family members, are dignified, keep their word, and have a good reputation with outsiders. They should be generous and ready to share with others, and eager to engage in good deeds, especially to meet necessary needs. In other words, **they are exemplary people, ...people that no one could find fault with.**

Paul encouraged them to be people of prayer. They are to pray with entreaties, petitions, and thanksgivings for all people, for leaders and all who are in authority, so that we might live a tranquil and quiet life, with all dignity. God wants all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. Therefore, Paul encouraged us to pray, lifting up holy hands without any wrath or dissension.

Those who are the product of the "sound doctrine" that Paul advocated, refused to pay attention to stories, or genealogies, which give rise to speculations that simply produce fruitless discussions (1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7). They *avoided* worldly and empty chatter, or oppositional arguments professed by others (1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 2:16), and *refused* foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. The Lord's bondservant is not to be quarrelsome.

Instead of quarreling, they focused on living so that no one could find fault with them. They complied with the government. Wives yielded to their husbands, and slaves to their masters without complaint (Tit. 2:5,8,10; 3:1).

Paul warned of a time when people would no longer hold to healthy teaching, but would instead accumulate for themselves teachers that would appeal to their own desires (2 Tim. 4:3). Those who teach "other things", who do not come to the healthy words regarding Jesus Christ and the teaching that produces good-devotion to Him, are puffed up, and do not understand anything. **Such people are sick or diseased with an unhealthy interest in controversies, and arguments about words, out from which arise envy, discord, degrading speech (slander or name-calling), evil conjectures, and constant friction** (1 Tim. 6:3-5). They themselves are emotionally agitated, and they agitate others.

Instead of arguing, we need to remember that we, too, were once lost, blind, unperceptive, uncooperative, and led astray. We were enslaved to our own lusts and pleasures, and had no time for God. **BUT, God saved us, anyway. He saved us, not on the basis of anything which we had done.** In His mercy, by the regenerating and renewing work of the Holy Spirit, He saved *us*. So, now *we* are heirs according to the hope of eternal life. **If God was able to do that for us, could He not do that for others around us? In fact, that is precisely what He intends to do!** But, He wants to use *us*, ...you and me..., to do *that*. **This is the work of God; He is including us in His work.**

So, the Beneficial Beliefs for 2024:

- (1.) I am a child of God, called to be a disciple (apprentice) to make disciples.
- (2.) I am to focus my attention on growing my relationship with Jesus, and learning to be led by His Spirit.
- (3.) I am to apply myself to establish disciplines, ...strategies of investment..., to grow in my faith. For example, "the doctrine of the apostles, the support and sharing with others, and devotion to prayer."
- (4.) To follow Jesus will require:
 - (a.) The separation and commitment of a soldier, to "please the One who enlisted me".
 - (b.) The discipline and "no corner cutting" of an athlete, to obtain the goal.
 - (c.) The hard work of a farmer to get the earliest and best crop.
- (5.) God wants me to keep my focus – Avoid, "beg off from", and refuse distracting and unproductive arguments.
- (6.) Be ready, watchful and thinking to engage in good deeds. These *are* beneficial and productive. They reveal Jesus, and put me in a place of service where God can use me. He may reveal my gifts and my ministry as I am faithful to serve Him by serving others.