



Pure Hearts Produce Pure Lives

Intro: Throughout human history there appear to be two opposing sides that have welcomed the swinging pendulum of perceived human virtue in the presence of God. On the one side, there have been those who have argued for a strict and rigid asceticism in order to please God. They seem to believe that the only way a sinful man can be made right before God is through much effort and self-sacrifice. On the other side, there have been those who have argued either that God is indulgent or that He is impotent. This group seems to believe that God will not or cannot punish disobedient sinners. Biblical Christianity stops the pendulum and claims that both sides have been partially right and partially wrong. This message seeks to explain what the Bible actually says about right standing and right living.

Passage: Titus 1:15-16

Background / Set-up

1. In American Christianity, like unto the general American culture, it has become taboo to make strong claims about truth – especially moral truth. “This is right.” or “That is wrong.” are among the statements that one simply cannot say, unless he or she adds the caveat that these assertions are only binding on my own personal conscience. Within many churches today, there exist attendees and church members who may be likened to floating volcanoes. If you pass them by, then you may admire their activity, their warmth, and their light; but if you bump into them, then you must be ready to endure their fury, their heat, and their battering display of dangerous spew. Is this Christianity? Are Christians doomed to maintain superficial relationship with one another as we pretend that everything is ok, until we can pretend no more, and then we simply leave? No! Christ has saved us from our sin, and we may now run from it and towards real community with Him and each other.

Exposition of Major Ideas in the Passage

1. IN CRETE...

1. Who are the PURE?

1. They were the elect (1:1), those who had the knowledge of the truth (1:1), who lived lives of hope (1:2) and godliness (1:1). They were a family, bonded by a common faith (1:4), and they enjoyed peace and grace from God – who is both Father and Savior (1:4).

2. Who are the Defiled / Corrupt?

1. Primarily, Paul is talking about the false teachers and empty talkers.
 1. These empty-talking deceivers are unbelieving and impure (1:15); they live lives that deny God's Lordship and His transforming power (1:16); Both their mind and will are corrupt (1:15), they are idolatrous, and they are rebellious towards the actual commands of God (1:16). In summary, they are "unfit for any good work" (1:16).
2. Necessarily, all of their students/listeners/disciples would follow in their footsteps.

3. What was the difference?

1. NOT the Talk...
 1. They both "**profess**" to know God!
 1. The defiled and corrupt ones may have even professed a greater knowledge and godliness than others.
 1. Towner – "The language indicates a solemn religious 'confession' or 'profession' that, from the context, must have been to a higher, more perfect, or even more complete knowledge of God." ¹
2. The WALK...
 1. The unbelievers "**denied God by their works**," and prove themselves to be what they already truly are (1:16).

2. AMONG US...

1. Who are the PURE?

1. They are the elect – the chosen ones of God (1:1)
 1. They are loved by God (1 Thess. 1:4), not because of any good in them, but beloved because of His good pleasure (2 Tim. 1:9).
2. They have the knowledge of the truth (1:1)
 1. They have knowledge of the truth of God, for God has made it known to them (1 John 2:20-21) through the proclamation of the Gospel (Rom. 10:17); and they have received and believed it gladly (1 Thess. 2:13).
3. They live lives of hope (1:2) and godliness (1:1)
 1. They look forward to the day when they shall see their Savior face-to-face (Rom. 5:2), and they live lives that are pleasing to their King while they joyfully await His coming (2 Tim. 2:22; 1 John 5:3-4).
 1. Hendryx – “Genuine Christians know that they have been forgiven of great sin and deserve heaven no more than others but it also means they will be fighting a war against sin for their whole lives. Don't let anyone tell you that a Christian can continue to abide in sin after being cleansed (1 John 3:9).”²
4. They are a family, bonded by a common faith (1:4)
 1. They are linked together with an eternal bond that makes them inseparably one in Christ Jesus forever (Eph. 4:1-6).
5. They enjoy peace and grace from God – who is both Father and Savior (1:4).
 1. They are no longer objects of God's wrath, but they are recipients of grace who live in peace with God; and God is with them as redeeming Father, merciful Brother, and endowing Spirit (Eph. 2:11-22).

² <http://www.monergism.com/blog/authentic-and-counterfeit-christianity>

2. Who are the Defiled / Corrupt?

1. They are opposed to the true Gospel and the true God
 1. Those who do not believe the true Gospel reject the only Savior for sinners (1 Peter 2:7-8); and those who are not the children of God are opposed to Him (Rom. 1:29-31).
2. They may profess to have knowledge of the truth, but do not possess it
 1. They may give lip service to God, claiming even to “know Him,” but their works and their lives demonstrate that such claims are merely lies (1 John 2:4; James 2:14-17).
 1. [Galatians 5:16, 19-21](#) – “16 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit... 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”
3. They live lives according to worldly ambitions and carnal motivations
 1. Their minds are set on earthly things rather than heavenly or godly things, and they are led by their fleshly desires for worldly pleasures (Phil. 3:18-19).
4. They are only temporarily bonded by superficial conveniences
 1. Even if they temporarily appear to be bonded with Christians, it is only a matter of time before the fleeting pleasures of the world will overcome their outward show of false sincerity (1 John 2:15-19).
5. They seek peace, and may even appear to have it in spurts, but they are not at peace with God; and they will either deny or distract themselves from the impending judgment of the Creator.
 1. Their peace is a momentary peace, a false security, and a lying harmony.
 1. They may deny that God is angry about sin, deny that God will ultimately judge sin, and even deny the existence of any righteous God.

2. They may maintain an ever-distracting busyness to avoid thinking about what they know of God's righteousness or power.
 1. Hebrews 10:26-31 – “If we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? ... ‘The Lord will judge his people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

3. **What is the difference?**

1. NOT the Talk...
 1. They both “**profess**” to know God!
2. The WALK...
 1. The unbelievers will and do “**deny God by their works**,” and prove themselves to be what they already truly are (1:16).
 1. 1 Peter 2:11 – “Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.”

- 3. If you are feeling quite inadequate and fearful, let me assure you that grace is available to you...**
1. Look to Christ! And not yourself.
 2. Ask a good friend to look at your life and make a trustworthy estimation.
 1. [2 Corinthians 13:5](#) – “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you fail to meet the test!”
 1. [RSB](#) – “Such evidence would include trust in Christ (Heb. 3:6), obedience to God (Matt. 7:21), growth in holiness (Heb. 12:14; 1 John 3:3), the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), Love for other Christians (1 John 3:14), positive influence on others (Matt. 5:16), adhering to apostolic teaching (1 John 4:2), and the testimony of the Holy Spirit within them (Rom. 8:15-16).”³
- 4. If you are feeling offended and incensed, then let me assure you that God knows who you really are and time will tell who you truly are...**
1. Admit your foolish pride, and lament that you ever held so tightly to it!
 1. [1 John 2:19](#) – “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.”
 1. [Hendryx](#) – “Sadly, it seems that many of the new postmodern ‘Christian’ authors think that being authentic and transparent means that, not only do Christians fail but we are to be proud of our failures and openly acknowledge them as just who we are, with no intent, with the help of God, to live otherwise. This may have the appearance of being authentic and transparent but it is, in fact, the most non-transparent of all.. Why? you ask. Because the person who does this is hiding their true identity: that they are a counterfeit child of God, and are in fact, a child of the devil.. and are doing his bidding.”⁴

³ Reformation Study Bible: see notes on 2 Corinthians 13:5

⁴ <http://www.monergism.com/blog/authentic-and-counterfeit-christianity>

Application

1. What is God commanding us to BELIEVE here?
 1. God is gracious, but He does not have to be
 2. We are sinful, but we do not have to be ruled by sin
 3. Christ is a good Savior and a loving Master

2. What is God commanding us to DO here?
 1. Look first to Christ for our purity!
 2. Submit to Christ in our minds, hearts, and lives.
 3. Calvin concluded his comments on our passage for the day by saying:
“Now let us fall down before the face of our good God, acknowledging our faults, praying Him to make us perceive them more clearly: and to give us such trust in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that we may come to Him and be assured of the forgiveness of our sins; and that He will make us partakers of sound faith, whereby all our filthiness may be washed away.”⁵

My Prayers

1. May God crush our pride where we have it
2. May God comfort our insecurities where we feel them
3. May God create genuine, honest, and Gospel-centered Community among the Congregation of FBC Diana

⁵ <http://www.monergism.com/word-our-only-rule-titus-115-16>

Pastor Marc's Commentary

1. Outline of the Letter:
 1. Salutation (1:1-4) **doctrinal statement #1*
 2. Organizing the Churches in Crete (1:5-16)
 1. Order and Qualified Elders (1:5-6)
 2. Qualifications of Elders/Overseers (1:7-9)
 3. Dealing with False Teachers (1:10-14)
 4. **Stark Distinctions and True Intimacy with God (1:15-16)**
 3. Instructing Various Groups (2:1-14)
 1. Instructions for Titus and Others A (2:1-6)
 2. Instructions for Titus and Others b (2:7-10)
 3. Theology for Life (2:11-14) **doctrinal statement #2*
 4. Instructing on Doing What is Good (2:15-3:11)
 1. Initial Charge (2:15-3:2)
 2. Human Depravity and the Grace of God (3:3-7) **doctrinal statement #3*
 3. Final Charge (3:8-11)
2. Closing and Benediction (3:12-15)

15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. 16 They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

3. *“To the pure, all things are pure”* (v15)

1. The “pure” are those who have been made or declared pure by God in Christ. There is no other way to understand such a term in this context.
 1. First, there is no one who is actually pure on account of his or her own righteousness or good works.
 1. Romans 3:10 – “None is righteous, no, not one.”
 2. Psalm 143:2 – “no one living is righteous before [God]”
 3. 1 John 1:8 – “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”
 2. Second, Christians are declared and made pure through Christ’s atoning work (justification) and the ongoing work of God’s Spirit (sanctification).
 1. 1 John 3:2-3 – “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”
 2. 1 Peter 1:14-16, 22 – “14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” ... 22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, Love one another earnestly from a pure heart.”
 3. Hebrews 10:19-23 – “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.”

4. Philippians 1:9-11 – “And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with the knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.
5. Revelation 19:6-8 – “Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of Mighty peals of thunder, crying out, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure’ – for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.”

4. *“to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure”* (v15)

1. Defiled and unbelieving are each descriptive of the same kind of individual. It is the impure and rebellious sinner, who remains apart from Christ.
 1. Humans are born as fallen children of Adam, hating righteousness, trusting themselves rather than God, naturally corrupt in every way, utterly blameworthy, and in bondage to their own sinful desires.
 1. Romans 5:12 – “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.”
 2. Diagnosing humanity, the Apostle Paul said, “They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanders, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, ruthless” (Romans 1:29-31).
 3. Romans 1:21-23 – “Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.”
 4. Proverbs 20:11 – “even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright.”
 5. Proverbs 21:8 – “the way of the guilty is crooked, but the conduct of the pure is upright.”

6. Ephesians 2:1-3 – “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which she wants walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work and the sons of disobedience – among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”
5. *“both their minds and their consciences are defiled [*corrupted NIV]”* (v15)
 1. Towner – “The perfect tense participle (lit. ‘those who have been defiled’) indicates a state of being, resulting from prior actions or decisions.”⁶
 1. In other words, they are defiled and corrupted, therefore they act in keeping with the disposition of their mind and conscience.
 1. Platt – “Here is a concise description of what we called the doctrine of total depravity.”⁷
6. *“They profess to know God”* (v16)
 1. Towner – “The language indicates a solemn religious ‘confession’ or ‘profession’ that, from the context, must have been to a higher, more perfect, or even more complete knowledge of God.”⁸
 1. Confronting the possible gnostic notion of this phrase, Towner says, “We are on safer grounds to remain within the context of Judaizing Christianity that sought to supplement the Pauline gospel and refine Christian living by means of ascetical purification.”⁹
7. *“but they deny him by their works”* (v16)
 1. Towner – “unbelief confuses rational perception and judgment, which produces patterns of behavior and thought that reinforce unbelief.”¹⁰
 2. Platt – “In the process they deny the truth of Scripture, question the sinfulness and inability of man to save himself, cheapen the cross, slight the Holy Spirit, and construct their own false system of salvation.”¹¹
 3. Towner – “Additions to the apostolic faith are regarded not as creative interpretation but as rejection of God...”¹²

6 Towner, 707

7 Platt, 250

8 Towner, 709

9 Towner, 710

10 Towner, 709

11 Platt, 251

12 Towner, 711

4. Hendryx – “Sadly, it seems that many of the new postmodern “Christian” authors think that being authentic and transparent means that, not only do Christians fail but we are to be proud of our failures and openly acknowledge them as just who we are, with no intent, with the help of God, to live otherwise. This may have the appearance of being authentic and transparent but it is, in fact, the most non-transparent of all.. Why? you ask. Because the person who does this is hiding their true identity: that they are a counterfeit child of God, and are in fact, a child of the devil ... and are doing his bidding.”¹³
8. *“They are detestable”* (v16)
 1. Towner – “First, the term ‘detestable’ describes them in terms of OT cultic defilement (from ritual impurity and involvement in idolatry) and as those who are ‘abominable’ to the Lord.”¹⁴
9. *“They are... disobedient”* (v16)
 1. Towner – “Second, the term ‘disobedient’ (3:3) places them squarely into the category of pagan unbelievers.”¹⁵
10. *“They are... unfit for any good work”* (v16)
 1. Towner – “Third, this denunciation finishes with a crushing summary crafted with Paul’s own language. ‘Unfit’ envisions a test that has been failed.”¹⁶

Conclusions:

Towner – “While there are certainly numerous areas in belief and practice where modern Christians must allow differences to exist side by side, there are also too many situations where indiscriminate ‘open-mindedness’ has allowed the historical gospel to be diluted to suit modern and postmodern sensibilities. A text such as this one might be regarded as a study in religious bigotry and narrow-mindedness, or it might be read as an authoritative wake-up call for many of us today.”¹⁷

¹³ <http://www.monergism.com/blog/authentic-and-counterfeit-christianity>

¹⁴ Towner, 710

¹⁵ Towner, 711

¹⁶ Towner, 711

¹⁷ Towner, 712

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