

Titus 3:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.

Analysis

But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law—μωρὰς δὲ ζητήσεις (mōras de zētēseis, foolish speculations) καὶ γενεαλογίας (kai genealogias, and genealogies) καὶ ἔρεις (kai ereis, and quarrels) καὶ μάχας νομικάς (kai machas nomikas, and disputes about the law). These describe the Judaizers' obsessions: speculative midrash, rabbinic genealogical debates, legal hairsplitting.

For they are unprofitable and vain (εἰσὶν γὰρ ἀνωφελεῖς καὶ μάταιοι, eisin gar anōphelēis kai mataioi)—ἀνωφελής (anōphelēs, useless/unprofitable) and μάταιος (mataios, empty/futile). Compare verse 8: sound doctrine is "profitable" (ώφελιμα, ὄφελιμα); false teaching is "unprofitable" (ἀνωφελεῖς). The test: does teaching produce godliness (v. 8) or empty controversy?

Historical Context

First-century Judaism's elaborate oral tradition generated endless debates: clean/unclean minutiae, Sabbath regulations, genealogical purity, legal loopholes. Rabbinic academies (Hillel, Shammai) argued these questions endlessly. Paul dismisses them as distractions from gospel essentials. Christianity simplified: faith in Christ, empowered by the Spirit, for God's glory.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What "foolish questions" and "strivings" occupy your theological energy instead of gospel essentials?
2. Do you engage in unprofitable controversies that generate heat without light, pride without transformation?
3. How do you discern between important doctrinal precision and empty speculation that doesn't promote godliness?

Interlinear Text

μωρὰς δὲ ζητήσεις καὶ γενεαλογίας καὶ ἔρεις καὶ
foolish But questions and genealogies and contentions and
G3474 G1161 G2214 G2532 G1076 G2532 G2054 G2532

μάχας νομικὰς περιῆστασο· εἰσὶν γὰρ ἀνωφελεῖς
strivings about the law avoid they are for unprofitable
G3163 G3544 G4026 G1526 G1063 G512

καὶ μάταιοι
and vain
G2532 G3152

Additional Cross-References

2 Timothy 2:14 (Word): Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.

2 Timothy 2:23 (Parallel theme): But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.

1 Timothy 4:7 (Parallel theme): But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

Titus 1:14 (Word): Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

2 Timothy 2:16 (Parallel theme): But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

Job 15:3 (Parallel theme): Should he reason with unprofitable talk? or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?

1 Corinthians 8:1 (Parallel theme): Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.