

Titus

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Titus

Although the New Testament doesn't mention anything of Paul's ministry in Crete, passages like 1:5 indicate clearly that the apostle and Titus had begun a missionary work in that community. This campaign probably developed during the years 63-64 C.E., on Paul's being freed from his first imprisonment in Rome. As he didn't have much time, Paul left Titus in Crete to look after the churches and at some place on the route to Nicopolis of Greece (3:12), he wrote to Titus. The letter contains evidence of having been written during autumn, probably in the year 64 C.E. (see 3:12).

Paul gave to Titus, a relatively young preacher of the gospel, the difficult task of directing the work in Crete. He later wrote this letter to give him more detailed instructions about how to do this job.

The letter has some similarities to I Timothy. They are both directed to young men who had been given positions of responsibility and leadership in their respective churches during Paul's absence. Both are occupied with the qualifications of those who must lead and teach the churches. The worldly corruptions that threaten the new churches are the same.

Titus embraces three great themes: organization of the church, sound doctrine and living in holiness. Titus should ordain elders in each city where a new congregation exists. They should be people of high moral qualities, solid in questions of principles, holders of true apostolic doctrine and able to refute contesters.

Abbreviations

B.C.E. - Before Christian era.

C.E. - Christian era.

LXX – Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament.

N.I.V. - New International Version

A.V.- Authorised (King James) Version

Titus Chapter 1

¹ Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness— ² in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, ³ and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour, ⁴ To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.

Paul begins with the words **“a servant of God.”** For him, as it should be for all of us, service is the foundation of any ministry. Many other things try to be that foundation, and young leaders try many of them, but they all fail. Our foundation is Jesus, who came not to be served, but to serve. (Mark 10:45) This is a key truth to begin a letter aimed at teaching and helping young leaders. It is not easy to have the servant heart, especially when we are young in leadership experience. But there is no other way. He is speaking as an **“apostle of Jesus Christ.”** His gift is that of the Apostle - releaser of gifts and founder of ministries with the ability to perform signs and wonders. He has his calling from Jesus. He wants to explain the function of his calling, and does this in quite a complex sentence.

* **“Knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.”** His job is to give the people of God knowledge of the things of God, so that they have the right material to lead godly lives. His focus is not on himself, but on the “ecclesia”, the people of God, the “Church.” Again this is a good beginning for all leaders, young and old. The church belongs to God, not to us, and our job is to build it up, not to build ourselves up.

* **“In the hope of eternal life.”** **“Hope”** is a powerful Christian virtue. It is not a weak dream, but a powerful conviction, which sees us through troubled times. Our hope is in “eternal life.” These words have a complex background, but here they refer to our hope of being in glory with Jesus. When our hope is fixed there, we will have the courage to endure to the end.

* **“Which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour.”**

The time has come for the revelation of the hope of Jesus, and this should encourage both God's people, and especially God's leaders to positive effort in living out the Christian faith, and in drawing others into it as well.

“Grace and peace” These words appear in 2 Corinthians, and this is my comment from there:- This is a very common beginning for a Pauline letter. **“Grace”** (Gk: “charis”) and **“peace”** (Gk: “eirene”) are the blessings he offers on many occasions. “Grace” means all that is of God can be ours, and “peace”, matching the Hebrew “Shalom,” means being in a right relationship with God - forgiven, loved and blessed. What more could any church ask?

⁵ The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. ⁶ An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. ⁷ Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸ Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

Titus was given a clear task - **to put in order**, We are not sure what things were like in Crete, but Titus had to get things sorted out, and at the same time, **“to appoint elders.”** (Gk “*presbyteros*”) - a term used for those who presided over assemblies or churches. The N.T. uses the term “bishop”, “elders”, and “presbyters” interchangeably. The elders had to have certain qualities:-

* **“Blameless”**. This same word is applied to “deacons” - a high moral standard in all types of Christian office. He must be faithful to one wife, his children must be “faithful”, (that is believing or having faith in Jesus). The home is to be a reflection of the work of the leader in the fellowship of God's people. What a tough challenge!

* **“not...”** Now comes a list of what the “episkapos” (“bishop”) must not be. The list seems obvious to us - not arrogant, hot tempered, a drunkard, not violent and not in the work for what he could get out of it. This list suggests the general

waywardness of the Cretan temperament, (see verse 12) and the fairly low standard which was being looked for in leaders.

* **“Rather”**. Now comes the list of positives. “Hospitable,” that is “devoted to the needs of others” self-controlled, upright (“just”) holy and disciplined. There is no mention here that he should not be a recent convert (1 Tim.3:6). Again it is hardly a radical list from our perspective.

One of his key functions is to hold on to sound doctrine and refute error. (This is often the task given to an Apostle.) We can only assume that there was such an error in Crete.

This may be a low standard for leaders, but at least there is some standard. The challenge to younger leaders is this:-

* To realise that there are standards we have to reach for and maintain in our own callings

* There are standards that others, who we think might be leaders, have to reach for as well. Leadership is not something to be thrown at anyone regardless of the quality of their lives and the quality of their abilities. Doing this leads to trouble.

¹⁰ For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group.¹¹ They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain.¹² One of Crete’s own prophets has said it: “Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.”¹³ This saying is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith¹⁴ and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth.¹⁵ To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.¹⁶ They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

Poor Titus! First he has to choose leaders who will not be of the highest calibre, and now he faces the situation described here. In the church are many who are rebellious of authority, empty headed talkers and deceivers. They deceive themselves, and consequently deceive others. Such are the “circumcision party” -

presumably Jewish teachers. These people must be silenced. This word means “to bridle or stop up the mouth.” Strong medicine is needed, because such activity can spoil the whole church. (“Your boasting is not good. Don’t you know that a little **yeast** leavens the whole batch of dough? 1 Cor.5:6) Paul sees this activity as driven by the desire for dishonest gain, and quotes a Cretan proverb to support his argument. (The Greek language contains the word “cretizo” which means “to lie!”) Action is needed - “rebuke them sharply.” (“Sharply” - to reprehend severely, chide, admonish, reprove”) Titus is left in no doubt as to what he must do, as many leaders before and after him have discovered. Being a leader of God’s people means that we are not allowed the luxury of letting situations slide. Action has to be taken, and we are the ones appointed to take it, whatever the cost. But we are to do so in order to keep the faith sound and strong - for them as well as for us.

Young leaders often do not perceive the truth in a situation – this comes with experience. Just in case Titus is in that category, Paul lifts the lid on the character of the person who is rebellious, empty headed and deceitful,(v14-16) and it’s not a pretty picture.

Titus Chapter 2

¹ You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. ² Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

But where is Titus to begin? He is to teach “**sound doctrine.**” Doctrine and theology have been rather overlooked in the church today. Experience has become everything. But Apostle Paul would never be so foolish. Sound doctrine is the basis for faith, and the reason for its survival. It is illuminated and energised by experience, but cannot be removed from our lives. It is the best antidote to false teaching, and the finest encouragement to God’s people.

Titus is to begin with the “older men”, those who have a lot of years of experience. They are to be self-controlled, and have to exhibit three Christian virtues:-

- * **“Faith.”** This means that they have faith and trust in Jesus.
- * **“Love.”** (“Agape”)
- * **“Endurance.”** They must be willing to pay the price for faith, face the struggle and endure.

These qualities, coming from the older men, will pour strength into the younger members of the church.

³ Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. ⁴ Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

Now Titus gets similar instructions for the women. A good paraphrase reverent in the way they should live” is “they should carry into daily life the demeanour of priestesses in the Temple.” This is a very high standard, but the younger women will set their standard by what they see in the mature women. They are not to be “in bondage to drink”, nor slander other members of the church. From these instructions we get a glimpse of the chaos in the Cretan church. In some ways it looks more of a challenge than the church in Corinth!

Then follows the positive instructions. They are to be “teachers of good things” – urging the basics of marriage and family life.

This whole concept of the mature living in such a way as to be examples to the flock is missing from much of church life today. We have sold ourselves to the concept of attracting families - mostly young ones. While this is good and right, we must not abandon those who have lived for decades in the Lord’s service, and have an example to follow, and pearls of godly wisdom, hard won, to share.

⁶ Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. ⁷In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness ⁸ and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Next, the “young men.” He is to “urge the younger men to control themselves.” (R.S.V.) But Paul goes further, and challenges Titus himself. He is to be the example for the younger men, and in fact for the whole Church family. In the end, exhortation is only second best. Demonstration is the best way to teach. Leaders avoid this instruction at their peril. What is the instruction to Titus here?

* **“set an example by doing good.”** He is the mould, from which his church members must be cast.

* **“In your teaching”.** **“Teaching”** is the Greek word “didaskalia” which means “doctrine.” God’s people have to be taught. We do not know what God wants by instinct. The Spirit can move in us, but He needs to move on the teachings we have received. Doctrine is often looked down on, but it is the keystone of the church Titus has been called to lead.

* **“Integrity”.** **“Soundness, cannot be condemned.”** If Titus makes sure his teaching falls into this category, then **“those who oppose you”** will be silenced. Sad to see this opposition, but all good things of the Kingdom are opposed, both without and within. A leader has to accept this, but at the same time try to guard his ministry in such a way that there is no room for accusation. This looks easy to write, but takes many years to master - if ever!

⁹ **Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them,** ¹⁰ **and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive.**

Slaves are to give their masters “satisfaction all round.” Paul does not challenge the issue of slavery, probably because he knew that it was a battle he could not win, and there were more important issues to be dealt with. The slaves in Crete appeared to be a bit more aggressive than those elsewhere. Paul tells them, in the Greek words, to be submissive, whereas elsewhere he encourages obedience.

But he also encourages them to be part of the mission and outreach of the church. Their mission field was to be their masters. What a thrilling challenge and encouragement to God’s people everywhere - especially those who feel that they are in dead end jobs. No job is “dead end” while there is the chance of it becoming part of the mission field.

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹² It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Titus gets a quick theological lesson! “Grace” (Gk: “charis”) and “salvation, (Gk “Sozo”) are on offer to everyone. Titus probably felt that some of his charges should be thrown into the sea! But a Pastor is not allowed to think like this. All those in his care are saved by grace, and all those on the outside can be similarly saved. When a Pastor loses sight of this, he has lost sight of his calling.

His people are to lead “self-controlled” lives translates better as “self-mastery”. We are to keep control of ourselves. This is our responsibility, and our daily challenge. We are to be “upright and godly”. Our morality must be transparent, and our lives modelled on God - godly. We are to do this “in this present age”. Many of the first Christians expected the imminent return of the Lord, so became lazy in their behaviour and work. Paul tells them, and us, “O.K. He may return. In the meantime this does not give us the excuse for moral laxity. While we wait, we must be godly.

As Christians we have to balance out lives between expectation of the Lord’s return, and a quality of life in the present which will be acceptable to him, and a challenge to the unbelieving world. This is a difficult balance, but is part of the challenge of faith.

Finally, the Apostle cannot resist a bit of theology. It’s straight forward but has a bite at the end **“a people..who are eager to do what is good.”** Theology has to result in changed lives. The Cretans should, as a result of the Gospel, be eager to do what is good - live godly lives, experience a strong and well founded church, devoid of self, and be changing the community in which they live. Wow! What a challenge! Titus certainly had his work cut out.

¹⁵ These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you

Being young is always a problem! But God is God, and will speak through who he chooses to speak through. We forget this at our peril.

Titus chapter 3

¹ Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, ² to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.

Why didn't Paul teach that we should oppose the "authorities?" Is he implying that we have to bow down to every dictatorship in the world? I think we are imposing our world view on him! In his day the Romans ruled, and he was trying to establish a fledgling church within their rule. The best route was not to upset them if possible. We do not have to go looking for trouble. We have to build the church.

³ At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. ⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. ⁸ This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

Wow! There's a very great deal of theology squeezed in here! Let's take it a step at a time, remembering that Paul is trying to equip Titus to be a good leader. Interesting isn't it - a good leader is best equipped not with the latest teaching techniques but with good theology.

³ At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

Life without Christ is:-

- * Foolish means “without spiritual understanding.”
- * Disobedience, which is a vice directed towards God.
- * Deceived is a work of the enemy.
- * Enslaved - prisoners to the things and pleasures of this world.
- * Malice and envy are the hallmarks of life without Christ, and they lead to:-
- * Hate and being hated.

The Apostle pulls no punches. No matter how nice the people are that we know, if they are living without Christ, this is the foundation for their lives.

But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.

“Kindness” (“chrestotes” - a Pauline word) and “Love” (“philanthropia”) tell us that God is good towards us, philanthropic, looking out for our best. These two characteristics, says Paul, were the main reasons for God saving us. Nice theology - warm and welcoming.

He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit

Paul never stops being a theologian! “Kindness and love” may be warm theology, but they have real bite. They signify that we are washed of our old way of life and born into a new one by the renewing work of the Holy Spirit.

Whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour,

This kindness and love, this washing and rebirth are possible because God is a generous God, wanting not only to save but to renew.

So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Why? So that we might have a fantastic hope – to be heirs of all that Jesus has won, is and will be.

⁸ This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

This is a massive theology, and Titus might have wondered what it had to do with the basic and day to day issues that he was facing. Paul answers that it has everything to do with daily life, because good theology leads to good lives and a good church. We abandon this position at our peril.

But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. ¹⁰ Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. ¹¹ You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.

We might summarise the whole of the letter to Titus in this way:-

“Titus, spend your time with good theology – knowing it, living it, teaching it and building on it.” Paul adds – “and don’t waste your time on issues that sound good but achieve nothing.” Every leader - not just the young ones - needs to hear this!

¹² As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there. ¹³ Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need. ¹⁴ Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives. ¹⁵ Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.

So this very exciting and practical letter fades quietly away in a series of personal remarks and requests.