

## TITUS

### The man:

Titus was probably Paul's convert, since the apostle calls him "my true son in our common faith" (Tit. 1:4). His name means "pleasant" in Greek. He was a gentile who joined the Apostle Paul on several of his missionary journeys.

*Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* states about Titus: "Paul first mentions Titus in Gal 2:1-3. As an uncircumcised Gentile, Titus accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem as a living example of a great theological truth: Gentiles need not be circumcised in order to be saved. Titus next appears in connection with Paul's mission to Corinth. While Paul was in Ephesus during his third missionary journey, he received disturbing news from the church at Corinth. After writing two letters and paying one visit to Corinth, Paul sent Titus to Corinth with a third letter (2 Cor 7:6-9). When Titus failed to return with news of the situation, Paul left Ephesus and, with a troubled spirit (2 Cor 7:5), traveled north to Troas (2 Cor 2:12-13). Finally, in Macedonia, Titus met the anxious apostle with the good news that the church at Corinth had repented. In relief and joy, Paul wrote yet another letter to Corinth (2 Corinthians), perhaps from Philippi, sending it again through Titus (2 Cor 7:5-16). In addition, Titus was given responsibility for completing the collection for the poor of Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:6,16-24; 12:18). Titus appears in another important role on the island of Crete (Titus 1:4). Beset by a rise in false teaching and declining morality, Titus was told by Paul to strengthen the churches by teaching sound doctrine and good works, and by appointing elders in every city (Titus 1:5). Paul then urged Titus to join him in Nicopolis (on the west coast of Greece) for winter (Titus 3:12). Not surprisingly, Titus was remembered in church tradition as the first bishop of Crete. A final reference to Titus comes from 2 Tim 4:10, where Paul remarks in passing that Titus has departed for mission work in Dalmatia (modern Yugoslavia). Titus was a man for the tough tasks. According to Paul, he was dependable (2 Cor 8:17), reliable (2 Cor 7:6), and diligent (2 Cor 8:17); and he had a great capacity for human affection (2 Cor 7:13-15). Possessing both strength and tact, Titus calmed a desperate situation on more than one occasion. He is a good model for Christians who are called to live out their witness in trying circumstances."

*The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* mentions: "The traditional connection of Titus with Crete is much more specific and constant, though here again we cannot be certain of the facts. He is said to have been permanent bishop on the island and to have died there at an advanced age. The modern capital, Candia, appears to claim the honor of being his burial place. In the fragment by the lawyer Zenas, Titus is called bishop of Gortyna."

### Place and Date of the Epistle:

According to *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*, "Paul wrote this epistle on his way to Nicopolis, where he intended wintering, and where he was arrested shortly before his martyrdom A.D. 67. The tone so closely resembles 1 Timothy ... that if the latter, as appears probable, was written at Corinth the epistle to Titus must have been so too, the epistle to Timothy shortly after Paul's arrival at Corinth, the epistle to Titus afterwards when he resolved on going to Nicopolis. The bearers of his epistles to Ephesus and Crete respectively would have an easy route from Corinth; his own journey to Nicopolis too would be convenient from Corinth."

### Outline of the Epistle:

*Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* provides the following outline of Paul's letter to Titus:

- I. Appoint Elders 1
  - A. Introduction 1:1-4
  - B. Ordain Qualified Elders 1:5-9
  - C. Rebuke False Teachers 1:10-16

- II. Set Things In Order 2:1—3:15
  - A. Speak Sound Doctrine 2
  - B. Maintain Good Works 3:1-11
  - C. Conclusion 3:12-15

## The Text:

### I. Appoint Elders

#### A. Introduction

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

In addressing Titus, Paul calls himself “a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ.” The Greek word for “servant” is *doulos*, the prime meaning of which is “a slave.” Paul considered himself to belong to God, spirit, soul and body, because he had been paid for with a high price. Service to God, which is obedience to the Father’s will, is the beginning and the end of God’s creation. As human beings we are in our natural element if we consider ourselves to stand in a relationship of servanthood to God. That would have been our natural condition, even if sin had never entered the human heart. What God had in mind, what He “hoped for” in creating man was voluntary obedience, obedience out of love. That would have been the key to all human happiness. The Psalmist sings: “I lift up my eyes to you, to you whose throne is in heaven. As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, till he shows us his mercy.”<sup>1</sup>

An apostle of Jesus Christ is one who is sent by Jesus Christ. Jesus said to His disciples: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”<sup>2</sup> This supposes the same fellowship with the Father, the same fullness of the Holy Spirit and the same authority over the powers of darkness.

The faith of God’s elect is the purity of faith that God guarantees for those who have placed themselves under His protection. The knowledge of the truth is the recognition of the truth that demonstrates itself in a life of godliness. It is important to see how Paul places this statement at the beginning of this epistle. It is as if, right at the onset, he wants to erect a rampart, a wall of protection against all kinds of false teaching that lead to moral derailment.

Faith, knowledge and hope are three lines Paul uses to sketch a picture of eternal life during our existence on earth. Faith is the element that builds on that which is invisible to the natural eye. Knowledge is based on that which appeals to our conscience. And hope is that which rejoices in those things which faith has drawn out of the future into the present.

All this is built upon the promises of God, God who cannot lie. Even the godless prophet Balaam knew, “God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak

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- 1. Ps. 123:1,2
  - 2. John 20:21

and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?”<sup>1</sup> It is God’s total reliability that makes His promises so precious and glorious. They form a most solid foundation upon which our fellowship with Him can be built.

A sure indication of the reality of our fellowship with God is our understanding of the present. A sinful man lives in the past that he idealizes, or he gazes with blind eyes upon a hopeful future. But a man of faith recognizes that it is in the present that God does what He planned in eternity. As the Psalmist sings: “This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”<sup>2</sup> The believer knows: “now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.”<sup>3</sup> The author of Hebrews says about this “day of opportunity”: “Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.’”<sup>4</sup>

Eternity is the great present, without past or future; it is the eternal “now.” Some of this ought to infiltrate our life on earth. Fullness of life with God does not begin tomorrow.

Paul says that God brought His Word to light through the preaching, a preaching God had entrusted to him. The only responsibility a preacher of God’s Word has is to get out of the way and let the Word of God do its work. We can do nothing more and nothing less. The fruit of our human endeavors will only be negative, hindering God’s revelation. But if we step aside God can step in and then the needs of the world will be met, through us and bypassing us. Paul does not seem to have any hesitation at this point. He is quite confident that his preaching was no act of self-revelation but only a revelation of the Word of God. For some of us much of our ego comes through when we preach. We have reached the place God wants us to reach when we can say with confidence that God has chosen us to reveal His Son through us and that He is actually doing this. That is a statement of true humility.

Paul calls Titus “my true son in our common faith.” Just as the body has a procreative function, so does the spirit. God wants us to be fruitful and to stimulate others in the faith that will save them. A German proverb states: “Becoming a father is not difficult, but being a father is.” Our spiritual fatherhood demonstrates itself clearer in the way we maintain a relationship with those we have led to Christ than in the fact that we brought people to the point of salvation.

#### B. Ordain Qualified Elders 1:5-9

***5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.***

***6 An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.***

***7 Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work, 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 had a task to fulfill in Crete. There was a church on the island. The Gospel had been preached; the seed had been sown and had taken root. Now the actual work begins. Education and training are a much more complicated process than birth. Much spiritual work ceases at the point where it ought to begin.

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1. Num. 23:19
  2. Ps. 118:24
  3. II Cor. 6:2
  4. Heb. 4:7

The secret of spiritual training lies in the delegation of tasks. When people in spiritual leadership try to hold on to the reins too tightly they kill the work of grace. God has in mind a person of spiritual maturity and that means that the potential for maturity is planted in the heart of each person who comes to God. It was not Titus' task to spoon-feed babies, but to find the people God had in mind as leaders and to inspire and encourage them to take their place. His task would be finished when they in turn would apply that principle in the church.

The fact that "an elder must be blameless" does not say that he must be sinless. Gardens without a single weed are non-existent. When weeds grow to the point where they can be pulled, they must be removed. When they are allowed to grow beyond that stage an admonition is called for. A blameless person is someone who does not allow un-confessed sin to mar his relationship with God.

In the polygamist society in which Titus worked it was important that men who wanted to be elders were monogamous. Although polygamy was tolerated in the Old Testament, it was at least a deviation of God's order of creation. We do not know if polygamy was a problem in any of the New Testament churches. It is possible that men who had more than one wife before their conversion were taken into the church as they were. The requirement that an elder be "the husband of but one wife" indicates that this be a model for all the members of the church.

"Whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient" sounds like an unreasonable prerequisite. How can one reproach a parent when a child makes the wrong choices? We find a line of promise running through all of Scripture, a promise which many parents never claim. The Apostle Paul suggests that children can be sanctified "in their parents." We read: "For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy."<sup>1</sup> As parents we may base our faith on this promise and believe that our children will come to a personal decision for Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives. This requires an active faith that expects God to keep His promises. It is not a vague and passive hope that everything will be all right at the end. Faith speaks in terms of "Me and my household..."<sup>2</sup> We may conclude from Jesus' words: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these"<sup>3</sup> that it is a natural tendency for a child to come to Jesus. The problem in Jesus' day was not the unwillingness of the children but the obstacles the adults put in the way. The other side of the coin, that is the opposite part of the faith that claims God's promises regarding the salvation of our children, ought to be: "Lord, please, do not allow me to be an obstacle for my children to come to faith in you!"

Then there is in the training of our children an authority parents must assume over their children, which is derived from their own fellowship with the Lord. If God knows us, we must direct our children to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. God said about Abraham: "For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."<sup>4</sup> Paul must have had this in mind when he wrote about unruly children.

The Greek word, rendered "blameless" in vv.6 and 7 is *anegkletos*, which literally means "un-accused." Darby renders it as "free from all charge." Paul uses the words twice, once in the context of the family and once as far as public opinion goes. The first context provides the foundation for the second. If our heart is blameless as far as communion with God is concerned, there will be clean intimacy in the family in

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1. I Cor. 7:14
  2. See Josh. 24:15.
  3. Matt. 19:14
  4. Gen. 18:19

which cheating and deception is excluded. We may be able to delude the church, but not our spouses and certainly not God.

The Greek word, rendered “overbearing” is *authades*, which has the meaning of “self-pleasing,” or “arrogant.” *The King James Version* renders it “self-willed.” It is tempting to hold a high opinion of oneself when one receives public approval. People who have this tendency ought not to become church elders. But God is able to purify our hearts from that kind of impurity when we enter into the seclusion of intimate fellowship with Him. A good example is Moses. To be “quick-tempered” is more a matter of character than of arrogance. The Greek word *orgilos* means: “easily angered.” We call it “short-fused.” Arrogance is a matter of exercise; we become arrogant as our popularity rises. But anger overcomes us so suddenly that we cannot defend ourselves against it. Moses killed an Egyptian in his anger; but in the quietude of the desert, alone with God and his sheep, he became the most humble man on earth.<sup>1</sup> The Holy Spirit can change man’s passion to compassion as He did with Peter.

“Not given to drunkenness” is not the same as total abstinence. C. S. Lewis remarks about abstinence: “It is a mistake to think that Christians ought all to be teetotalers; Mohammedanism, not Christianity, is the teetotal religion. Of course it may be the duty of a particular Christian, or of any Christian, at a particular time, to abstain from strong drink, either because he is the sort of man who cannot drink at all without drinking too much, or because he wants to give the money to the poor, or because he is with people who are inclined to drunkenness and must not encourage them by drinking himself. But the whole point is that he is abstaining, for a good reason, from something which he does not condemn and which he likes to see other people enjoying. One of the marks of a certain type of bad man is that he cannot give up a thing himself without wanting everyone else to give it up. That is not the Christian way. An individual Christian may see fit to give up all sorts of things for special reason—marriage, or meat, or beer, or the cinema; but the moment he starts saying the things are bad in themselves, or looking down his nose at other people who do use them, he has taken the wrong turning. One great piece of mischief has been done by the modern restriction of the word Temperance to the question of drink. It helps people to forget that you can be just as intemperate about lots of other things. A man who makes his golf or his motor bicycle the center of his life, or a woman who devotes all their thoughts to clothes or bridge or her dog, is being just as ‘intemperate’ as someone who gets drunk every evening. Or course, it does not show on the outside so easily: bridge-mania or golf-mania do not make you fall down in the middle of the road. But God is not deceived by externals.”

“Not violent” is the rendering of the Greek word *plektes* which means “quarrelsome,” or “striking out at people.” “Not pursuing dishonest gain” is the translation of the Greek word *aischrokerdes*, which denotes an addiction to money. This kind of addiction demonstrates itself in the unscrupulous way one “makes a buck.” The motto “business is business” can be very detrimental to one’s spiritual life.

The Bible suggests that hospitality is an indication of a healthy spiritual life. The author of Hebrews writes: “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.”<sup>2</sup> Yet, few people exercise hospitality on the basis of a biblical vision.

Loving what is good means loving God. Jesus says: “No one is good — except God alone.”<sup>3</sup> It is impossible for us to love God without knowing what good is and to love that which is good with all our heart. The Apostle looks for this insight in an elder. Understanding that God is the ultimate measure of all that is good means recognizing that goodness in that which surrounds us. Paul wrote to Philemon: “I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.”<sup>4</sup>

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1. See Num. 12:3.
  2. Heb. 13:2
  3. Luke 18:19

“Self-controlled” is the translation of the Greek word *sophron*, which Paul uses three times in this letter. In the other contexts it is variously rendered “temperate,”<sup>1</sup> and “discreet.”<sup>2</sup> The same word is found, although in slightly different form, in the verse: “When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his *right mind*.”<sup>3</sup>

Every person possesses an inherent sense of justice. That does not mean that everyone is just. In most cases we limit our understanding of justice to matters that pertain to our personal lives alone. Our sense of justice will be aroused particularly if we feel we have been treated unjustly. Paul’s requirement of justice in an elder goes well beyond this concept. God is just in relation to all of mankind. Abraham asked the question: “Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”<sup>4</sup> And Jesus said: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”<sup>5</sup> It is our relationship with God that makes us just.

The word “holy” is not the same as that what usually carries the meaning of being set aside for God. It is more akin to the previous “just,” which denoted inter-human relationships. It means possessing a heart that is turned toward God as a flower turns to the sun. It is not the piety that seems dull but a fresh and vibrant relationship with God. “Disciplined” is the rendering of the Greek word *egkrates*, which means being strong or masterful in a thing,” of “controlling one’s appetite.” This suggests that there is within the human heart a nature that, if left unbridled, will lead to destruction. A person who does not control his passions, who says everything that boils up in his heart, is a slave of sin that becomes stronger than he is. Discipline is not prudery but the victory of God’s light over our inner darkness.

We have the advantage over the people in Paul’s day that “the trustworthy message,” mentioned in v.9 has been written out completely. We are not exposed to the danger of distortions that a transmission of oral traditions brings along. The strength of a modern-day elder is that he knows the Bible and that he obeys its message. We must follow in the footsteps of Jesus who demonstrated that He, not only knew the Scriptures by heart (proof of this is His quotes from Deuteronomy when the devil tempted Him), but was also able to apply them to His circumstances. Thus He forged the Scriptures into a mighty weapon which caused the evil one to leave Him alone. There is a wide difference between throwing around Bible verses and handling the Word of God in a practical manner. Satan himself is known to have quoted Scripture freely and he has demonstrated a great deal of shrewdness in doing so. But he has a deadly fear of a practical application of the Word of God to everyday circumstances. If we know to handle the Bible skillfully and intelligently and if we draw strength from it, Satan will be afraid to approach us too closely. We will be able “to refute those who oppose it.”

#### C. Rebuke False Teachers 1:10-16

***10 For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group.***

***11 They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach — and that for the sake of dishonest gain.***

***12 Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons."***

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4. Philemon 6

1. Titus 2:2

2. Titus 2:5

3. Mark 5:15

4. Gen. 18:25

5. Matt. 5:44,45

**13 This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith  
 14 and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the 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.**

Vv.10-12 seem to indicate that there are certain groups of people in certain areas, who show certain characteristics that make them more open to false teachings than other groups. It seems mysterious that racial characteristics or local conditions would make people prone to be irrational, weird or unbalanced. As if a whole tribe could be closed to the Gospel, simply because of a natural unfitness to receive the message. Why would Cretans always be liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons? Is the Apostle Paul prejudiced; is he overreacting? Evidently, the apostle wanted to warn Titus of the existing natural obstacles so that he would be prepared if an immediate response to his preaching of the message would not be forthcoming. It is obvious that God is able to overcome any natural hindrance by the power of the Holy Spirit in us. But for this, concentrated power in prayer is needed as well as a certain different emphasis in the bringing of the message.

Paul advises Titus to “rebuke them sharply.” This sounds easier said than done. It is usually not true that one can win an argument by reasoning more convincingly than the other party. Most people are not convinced by losing a dispute even if they seem to be. Conviction comes from the Holy Spirit, not through logic. The rebuke Paul has in mind, therefore, is the Word of God spoken by the authority of the Spirit. That is what changes man’s heart. And if the heart changes the mind will follow.

The Jewish myths and commands of those who reject the truth are probably references to the influences of Gnosticism and asceticism. True religion means serving God. But a human begin somehow manages to keep himself in the center of his service to God. Our “I” understands the art of camouflage, using procedures, material, and expressions borrowed from the real service of God, but without the same content. Paul dismantled this danger elsewhere, when he wrote to the Colossians: “Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.”<sup>1</sup> Here also, the human commands are pious ways to avoid the path that leads to genuine service of God. Only God’s commands lead to God, human commands lead to man.

Paul’s words in v.15 – “To the pure, all things are pure” must have sounded revolutionary to the Jews of his day. The prevailing idea was that cleansing or pollution was caused by the objects one dealt with, not with the condition of one’s own heart. Fallen man saw himself subjected to the power of lifeless things. The redeemed person is called to reign. Jesus clarified this when He said: “Listen and understand. What goes into a man’s mouth does not make him ‘unclean,’ but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him ‘unclean.’ ” We read: “Then the disciples came to him and asked, ‘Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?’ He replied, ‘Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.’ Peter said, ‘Explain the parable to us.’ ‘Are you still so dull?’ Jesus asked them. ‘Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean.’ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man ‘unclean’; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him ‘unclean.’ ”<sup>2</sup>

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1. Col. 2:23

2. Matt. 15:10-20

Paul points out that the wrong perception of what is clean or unclean comes from the pollution of the mind and the conscience. Man's actions are determined by his philosophy of life. It is not true that it does not matter what one believes as long as one lives a good life. Our thinking controls our action and our actions demonstrate what we think. Wrong thinking will lead to a bad conscience. But if God illuminates our intelligence, it will demonstrate itself in a life that exhibits holiness and love of God.

The people in Crete professed to know God, but in their way of living they denied Him. Verses like these prove that there is no difference of insight between Paul and James. Justification is by faith, but faith without works that are proof of faith does not exist. Faith that consists of words alone is not the kind of faith that changes lives. Faith that lays a hold of justification is an organism that consists in a heart that leans on God's promises, a mouth that confesses those promises and a body that can do nothing else but express what the heart experiences. Every individual is detestable as long as he is disobedient to God. It is impossible for us to be fit for any good work if the Spirit of God does not prepare us.

## II. Set Things In Order 2:1—3:15

### A. Speak Sound Doctrine 2

**1 You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.**

**2 Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.**

**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 train 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.**

**6 Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled.**

**7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness 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.**

**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 Savior attractive.**

**11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.**

**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 glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, 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.**

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

The Greek text of v.1 opens with the word "But," which *The International Version* omits. The word "but" sets Titus apart from the crowd. Paul orders Titus to be different from the ones he described in the last two verses of the previous chapter. We must always be watchful to react properly. To keep quiet because others talk so much can lead to eternal silence. There must be a balance between speaking and acting. As human beings we are subject to our emotions. We need to be constantly stimulated and revived. No one is always so constantly full of the Spirit of God that he can maintain a constant level of spirituality without some outside stimulus. If this were not so, it would make no sense to preach to believers. But a greater spur



than hearing the Word is to pass on the message to others. As a woman matures in giving life to a baby, so we grow spiritually as we lead others to the Lord. Therefore: “You must teach...!”

Older men must be “temperate.” The Greek word *presbutas* refers to gray hair. One could expect that people with gray hair have added some experience in life. Their attitude must be “sober,” which has the sense of being “circumspect.” Paul uses the word three times in his letters to Timothy and Titus. In one case it is rendered “temperate,” as in the verse: “Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, *temperate*, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.”<sup>1</sup> *The King James Version* uses the word “vigilant.” Being “sober” does not mean that all the “wild hair” has disappeared or that the fire of youth is quenched, but it means that the storms of life have left a deposit of wisdom and experience. He, who passes through all the hardships and trials of a human life and comes out as he went in, must have a heart that is so hard that even the powerful seed of the Gospel could not germinate in it.

Being sober in the biblical sense of the word is more than “keeping one’s cool.” It means the ability to see through the pretense in which people wrap themselves in this world and to recognize the spiritual reality beyond it. It means to “be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.”<sup>2</sup> What Paul prescribes here particularly for older men, he mentions elsewhere for elders or overseers in particular.<sup>3</sup> This proves that God wants overseers to be an example to be followed by all believers. There is no reason that the spiritual life of every one of God’s children would not be on the same level as that of the elders of the church.

“Self-controlled” is the same word as is found in 1:8. “Sound in faith” refers to spiritual health. A person is physically healthy if he is well fed and all his organs function normally. Spiritual health speaks of a soul that delights in the Word of God, a person who accepts the place God has chosen for him and who functions there according to the gifts of grace and to the light he has received from above. To go above what is written, to refuse the place of God’s choice, to not exercise the gifts of the Spirit is not sound or healthy.

Love and endurance go together with a sound faith. It is impossible to have a healthy faith in God without loving Him and our fellowmen. The word “endurance” presupposes all the opposition and trials of life. If we live a godly life, we swim against the current. If we begin to walk with God, everything else will be against us. Endurance is the quality of faith that says in those circumstances: “If God is for us, who can be against us?”<sup>4</sup>

The message to older women is that they ought to live “reverent” lives. The Greek says literally “as becomes holiness.” Some translations read: “priest like.” *The New Living Translation* reads: “Similarly, teach the older women to live in a way that is appropriate for someone serving the Lord.” *The Darby Version* links the beginning of the verse to the second part by stating: “that the elder women in like manner be in deportment as becoming those who have to say to sacred things.” The expression “priest like” suggests that older women must give the impression as if they just come out of the sanctuary. The testimonies of women in the Bible who put their trust in the Lord and who had found the secret of intimacy with Him are among the most precious parts of Scripture. It seems that some women have been able to penetrate more deeply into this secret than men. What would the history of salvation look like without women such as Hannah, the mother of Samuel, Anna who was in the temple at the time of Jesus’ circumcision, Mary, the mother of Jesus and the women who served the Lord with their possessions!

A woman who knows the quietude of intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ is as a pearl that with its soft shining light seems to keep the secret of its preciousness. On the other hand, a corrupt woman is like an abyss of utter darkness. A slanderous tongue produces decay in the bones of fellowmen. A woman who is an

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1. I Tim. 3:2
  2. I Peter 4:7
  3. See I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7-9.
  4. Rom. 8:31

alcoholic appears more decadent and more dangerous than any male drunkard. The spoiling of the best is always the worst.

In regards to the controversial point of wives being subjected to their husbands, it is often forgotten what Paul must have had in mind when he talked about this. The point was the impression a Christian married woman would make upon the outside world. Her attitude was to be a testimony to the Gospel in a pagan world. The important argument is “so that no one will malign the word of God.” Paul reveals the same kind of concern in vv.9 and 10 that deal with the relationship slave-master. In the pagan world of Paul’s day a woman’s position was one of absolute subjection to her husband. With the coming of the Gospel came the emancipation of women. The Gospel of Jesus Christ does not place a woman below a man. To the contrary! Paul was concerned that this emancipation would cause the maligning of the Word of God. In order to understand this we must keep in focus the fact that the general belief at that time that a woman’s place of slavish subjection was a God-given ordinance. Paul wants women to be subjected to their husband “for the Lord’s sake,” so that no one would find reason to slander the Gospel. In our time no one would try to use Paul’s admonition to slaves as a plea to reinstall slavery; but we do use Paul’s similar advice to women to obstruct a woman’s emancipation. There is no stronger argument for emancipation than the Good News of redemption in Jesus Christ!

In vv.6-8 Paul urges Titus to be himself a model for the youth of his day. “Young man” and “self control” does not seem to fit together. That is the reason Paul uses the word “encourage.” The enemy will use every means to pound upon the weak spots in the church in order to destroy the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. Youthful presumption and unbridled enthusiasm are generally accepted everywhere. But when people see young people who lack maturity in their spiritual life, this lack of balance is immediately put on account of the Gospel itself. If Paul could see what is left of the testimony of our Lord in the church today, he would pull his hair out. The lampstand has been removed.<sup>1</sup> The Gospel is no longer being maligned; it is no longer criticized. But the gold has lost its luster<sup>2</sup> and this is accepted as normal. There is nothing left to be maligned!

The subject of slavery, which is the topic of vv.9 and 10, raises all kinds of questions in the modern mind. The Bible does not recommend abolition of slavery; neither does it condone it. We must bear in mind, however, that it is because of the preaching of the Gospel that slavery has been abolished in most places in this world. The Word of God always renews inside-out. The keeping of slaves is an indication of man’s inner enslavement. If slavery is abolished in the soul of man, society will follow. Paul did not intend to maintain the existing condition of his time at all cost. But he also did not want to start a war of slogans and rebukes that would only hit the outside without changing the heart of the matter.

The word “for” in v.11 pertains to the fivefold admonition in the preceding verses: to older men, older women, young women, young men and slaves. It proclaims the actual reason for the prescribed conduct. God’s grace is for all men. Paul’s vision of the scope of God’s grace is not too small. That vision was the driving force of Paul’s preaching of the Gospel. He wanted the vision of God’s love for the whole world to govern the behavior of all five of the groups addressed. He wanted them to be willing to sacrifice their personal privileges (young women), their personal freedom and right to self-determination (slaves) so that they would not be an obstacle for other people to come and know the Lord. His point was to “become all things to all men so that by all possible means [he] might save some.”<sup>3</sup>

The Greek word translated “teach” is *paideuo*, which has the primary meaning of “training up a child.” It contains the thought of discipline. Discipline is probably the prevailing thought in v.12. It is important to understand that the discipline factor is part of God’s grace. If we think that God’s grace only consists in wiping clean the slate of past sin, we have failed to understand God’s plan of salvation. God’s

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1. See Rev. 2:5.
  2. Lam. 4:1
  3. See I Cor. 9:19-22.

grace is rehabilitating. It restores to us our original human dignity. Paul explains what constitutes this discipline. Negatively, it means “to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions”; positively, it means “to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.” That is the attitude of those who wait for “the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

The Greek text reads literally: “denying ungodliness and worldly lust.” “To say ‘No’ is an excellent translation of the idea. We must say a strong “No” to everything that is ungodly, to everything that leaves God out of the picture. Denying ungodliness means drawing God into everything we do and surrendering ourselves to Him in every aspect of life. Our deeply rooted craving for worldly things will wither when we ask God to occupy the central place in our life. Such an act of complete surrender to God involvement in us will bear fruits of self-control, uprightness and godliness in our daily life. “Self-control” demonstrates that discipline is not something imposed from outside as something that is forced upon us, but that it is a spontaneous demonstration of what is inside us. It points to a new source of life, to adjustment to a new discipline. “Uprightness” stands for God’s righteousness that has become flesh and blood in us. We are not only declared righteous on the basis of our faith but also because our faith bears the fruits of righteousness. “Godliness” is the opposite of godlessness. Just as God abhors a godless life, so does the Almighty find joy in a life that belongs to Him. As the bride sings in the Song of Solomon: “Awake, north wind, and come, south wind! Blow on my garden, that its fragrance may spread abroad. Let my lover come into his garden and taste its choice fruits.”<sup>1</sup>

#### B. Maintain Good Works 3:1-11

***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 to show true humility toward all men.***

***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 Savior 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 Savior,***

***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.***

***9 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 him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.***

***11 You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.***

People need to be reminded of their Christian testimony in an evil world. The first demonstration of Christian character is in our attitude toward the government. We must bear in mind that when God created man, both male and female, the mandate given to them was to rule over the animal world, not over one another. Governments came into being when sin entered creation. When David asked the question: “What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?” he answered: “You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the

1. Song 4:16

birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.”<sup>1</sup> Christians are not called upon to topple governments, regardless of how wicked they are. We must be anti-revolutionary.

In view of the fact that we live in a sinful world and carry within us a sinful nature, we need laws to regulate our own moral behavior and to allow humanity to live together in peace. The establishment of human government was God’s Plan B. God’s original plan must have been that this world be run as a theocracy. But sinful human nature forms an obstruction to this, as the early stages of Israel’s history demonstrate. That was why God established human governments.

The Apostle Paul explained to the Christians in Rome: “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.”<sup>2</sup>

The Apostle Peter concurs with this as is obvious from the statement: “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.”<sup>3</sup>

Paul advised Timothy that Christians should go beyond outward submission to intercession: “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.”<sup>4</sup>

Christians ought to go beyond being law-abiding citizens and become positive contributors to the good of society. All of vv. 1 and 2 pertains to our attitude in society as people who are positive witnesses to the truth of the Gospel. Elsewhere, the Apostle put it this way: “Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life — in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing.”<sup>5</sup>

The Greek of v.2 reads literally: “To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but all gentle, showing meekness unto all men.” The Greek word, rendered “humility” is *prautes*, which can be translated “mildness.” It is related to the word *praus*, which Jesus used in the beatitude: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”<sup>6</sup> As in the times of the Roman Empire so now, the word “meek” does not have a strong positive connotation. *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines “meek” as “characterized by patience and long-suffering,” but also as: “deficient in spirit and courage.” It is mainly the influence of the Gospel

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1. Ps. 8:4-8
  2. Rom. 13:1-7
  3. I Peter 2:13-17
  4. I Tim. 2:1,2
  5. Phil. 2:14-16
  6. Matt. 5:5

that has given to “meek” a more positive meaning. It will be the meekness of the Lamb that will bring about the victory in this world’s last war.

Vv.3-9 invite us to look back and see where we came from in order to realize how far we have come. The Apostle characterizes passions and pleasure as being foolish and deceptive. The keyword in this phrase is “disobedient.” It is the refusal to obey the Word of God that leads to emptiness of heart, which makes us experiment with all kinds of surrogates to fill the void. The Greek word for “pleasure” is *hedone*, which has a derogatory meaning in the New Testament. We find it in the verse: “The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.”<sup>1</sup> The English word “hedonism” is derived from the Greek.

The other side of the coin of pleasure shows malice and hatred, indicating that the pleasure mentioned is not related to the joy of the Lord. God’s image within us does not respond well to malice and hatred. We are created to be loved and loving and when those elements are lacking we do not develop in a healthy manner. Being deprived of love makes us like plants that are left in the dark.

In vv.4-7 Paul outlines the process of salvation, regeneration and sanctification. The initiator of this process is God, the Father. We conclude this from the fact that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are mentioned separately. God, the Father revealed His kindness and love in sending Jesus Christ to be our Savior and the Holy Spirit to apply this salvation to us.

The words “kindness” and “love” are interesting words in Greek. “Kindness” is the translation of *chrestotes*, the prime meaning of which is “usefulness,” or “moral excellence.” “Love” in this context is not *agape*, but *philanthropia*, a word from which the English “philanthropy” is derived. It means particular “love towards man.” We find it in Luke’s description of the shipwreck he and Paul experienced at the island of Malta. We read: “The islanders showed us unusual *kindness*. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold.”<sup>2</sup>

The application of the word *chrestotes* to the person of Jesus Christ suggests that, besides being our Savior, He is also our model, demonstrating in the way He lived on earth as one of us, what a life pleasing to God should be like. The latter is particularly the point the Apostle Paul wants to make in this epistle. The salvation Paul speaks about goes beyond the forgiveness of sin, beyond being saved from going to hell, to being renewed by the Holy Spirit and behaving like people who are heirs of eternal life. The way Paul puts it makes clear that there is no reason why someone who accepted the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross as payment for his sins, would not live a life that is sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Since we have been washed by the Holy Spirit, why would we not live clean lives!

“This is a trustworthy saying” reads literally in Greek: “Faithful the saying.” The word *pistos* is derived from a word meaning “faith” or “true.” It is a statement that requires faith but it is also a statement of truth. *The Adam Clarke’s Commentary* interprets these words as being “the true doctrine.”

A confession of faith ought to be followed up by an act of consecration to good works. The Greek text reads literally: “I want you to affirm constantly that they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.” The Greek verb *proistemi* means literally “to stand before”, “to preside,” “to practice.”

It is always easier to argue about the Word of God than to accept and obey it. As a matter of fact, arguing is often used as a substitute to obedience. About the words “avoid foolish controversies...” *The Adam Clarke’s Commentary* remarks: “In these the Jews particularly delighted; they abounded in the most frivolous questions; and, as they had little piety themselves, they were solicitous to show that they had descended from godly ancestors.” I do not think the Jews have a particular corner on the market. Being a Dutchman, I can say, though “tongue in cheek,” that in Holland there are more theologians than Christians.

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1. Luke 8:14
  2. Acts 28:2

The genealogies refer to the Gnostics who had invented a system of approach to God that deviated from the Gospel. Paul seems to suggest that people who indulge in the practice of arguing and debating have something to hide. Instead of confessing their sin and allowing themselves to be cleansed by the blood of Christ they use debate about the truth as a cover-up. Titus is instructed to issue a warning to those people and treat them as unbelievers if they do not respond to a second warning. The expression “self-condemned” is interesting. The Greek word *autokatakritos* is rather self-explanatory. This is the only place in the New Testament where it is found.

### C. Conclusion

- 12. When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter.**  
**13. Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.**  
**14. And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.**  
**15. All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.**

Vv.12 and 13 contain some practical arrangements Paul intended to make for the next several months following the writing of this epistle.

*The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* comments here: “After a few personal notes, Paul gives the final reiteration of the main burden of his letter—that the believers should be careful to maintain good works. ... Artemas is not mentioned elsewhere; Tychicus appears in Acts 20:4; Eph 6:21; Col 4:7; 2 Tim 4:12. Nicopolis is in Epirus. Titus is instructed to join the apostle there (2 Tim 4:10, note). ... Zenas appears only here. Apollos was an Alexandrian; it is possible that the journey alluded to was to Alexandria by way of Crete.”

Little or nothing is known about Zenas, whom Paul calls “a lawyer.” His full name would probably have been Zenodorus, meaning “gift of Zeus.” Bible scholars do not agree on whether Zenas was an expert in Jewish law, the Torah, or Roman law. *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* states: “It is impossible to determine whether Zenas was a Roman juriconsult or a Jewish doctor. Grotius thinks that he was a Greek who had studied Roman law.” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* writes about Paul’s wishes regarding Zenas: “It is not certain where Paul was when he wrote the Epistle to Titus. But he directs Titus to come to him to Nicopolis, where he had resolved to spend the ensuing winter. And he adds the injunction that he desires him to ‘bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos’ - Paul’s old friend from Alexandria—with him ‘on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them’ (the King James Version). This may mean that Paul wished to have Zenas and Apollos with him at Nicopolis; but, on the other hand, it may not have this meaning. For the King James Version in translating ‘bring’ is in error. The word signifies, as given in the Revised Version (British and American), ‘set forward’ on their journey, that is, furnish them with all that they need for the journey. But even supposing Paul is not instructing Titus to bring Zenas and Apollos to Nicopolis—though this is perhaps what he means—yet it is most interesting to find these two friends of the apostle mentioned in this particular way, and especially at a time so near to the close of his life. Paul was unselfish as ever, solicitous that Zenas and Apollos be comfortably provided for on their intended journey. He is full of affectionate regard for them, interested in their welfare at every step; while he himself is far distant in another country, he remembers them with tender and sympathetic friendship. Doubtless the two friends reciprocated his affection.”

Advising to provide for the needs of the travelers mentioned above brings Paul to state that looking out for other people’s comfort ought to be a way of life for Christians. The Greek word *manthano*, “to learn,” indicates that this attitude does not come natural; it takes practice. Ironically, it is in directing one’s attention to the needs of others that one’s own needs will be met.

*Barnes’ Notes* observes about the last verse of this letter: “Paul, at the close of his epistles, usually mentions the names of those who sent affectionate salutations. Here it would seem to be implied that Titus

knew who were with Paul, and also that he himself had been traveling with him. He evidently refers not to those who were residing in the place where he was, but to those who had gone with him from Crete as his companions.” The phrase “Greet those who love us in the faith” is unique to this epistle. And the words “Grace be with you all” suggest that this letter was more than a mere personal note to Titus.

Toccoa Falls, GA, 9/20/06