



Paul's Letter to Titus

Chapters 1-3

Unfinished Business

Titus' main job in being sent to the island of Crete is to bring some order to the new churches which had been planted there by Paul and his missionary team. *"This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order..." (Titus 1:5)*

We do not read about any missionary activity of Paul in on Crete in the book of Acts though Cretans were present in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit was first given on the day of Pentecost (See Acts 2:11). But all we really know from the New Testament of this church is from this letter.

Paul's normal way of writing letters is to move from the indicative teachings to the imperative commands, from the theology of the gospel to the practice of the gospel. In the case of the Cretan church, that formula needs to be reversed. Paul sees the primary concern as being more practical in nature.

Crete was infamous for the immorality among the general populace. Polybius, an ancient historian wrote that it was "almost impossible to find...personal conduct more treacherous or public policy more unjust than Crete" (*Histories* 6.47) Cicero wrote: "Moral principles are so divergent that the Cretans...consider highway robbery honorable." (*Republic* 3.9.15)

Paul quotes the 6th century Cretan, Epimenides:

One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith... Titus 1:12-13

Paul is concerned that the culture of Crete is so corrupt that the emphasis first and foremost needs to be on accountability to the Christian way of life—to life in accord with godliness. In his opening greeting Paul underscores how he was sent (apostle):

"for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness in the hope of eternal life, which God who never lies, promised before the ages began and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior." Titus 1:1-3

The truthfulness of God is in contrast to the lying character in the people of Crete. In this letter, Paul starts with the practical concerns pertaining to differentiating the Christian life "which accords with godliness" from the corrupt surrounding culture. He then works his way back to the Gospel of Salvation.



Paul has three primary tasks of unfinished business for Titus. Titus is charged to appoint godly leaders in every town. He is to teach the congregation the life which accords with Christian principles and practice. Finally he is called to remind them of their salvation in Jesus Christ.

The outline of the letter to Titus logically follows Paul's three part assignment: Appoint. Teach. Remind.

The Outline of Titus

Titus	Chapter 1-3
<i>Appoint</i> for them godly leaders	Titus 1
<i>Teach</i> them to live the Christian Life	Titus 2
<i>Remind</i> them of their witness to the Gospel	Titus 3

Appoint for them Godly Leaders (1)

The first order of business for Titus was to build a leadership team. Paul uses the terms elders and overseers interchangeably. There were city-states (Paul calls them towns) on the island of Crete at the time. The first task is to have an elder in every town. In this role, Titus is functioning as a regional bishop or overseer himself. Paul charges Titus:

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you. Titus 1:5

As within 1 and 2 Timothy, there are certain qualifications required for leadership positions in the church. In Crete, finding men who met Paul's criteria may have been a challenge. None the less Paul insists on a godly character marked by a good reputation, strong family life, self control and good works. The elder/overseer also needs to have the ability and commitment to teach sound doctrine. Likewise, he must have the character of a courageous leader who can stand up to others and correct false teaching and rebuke false practice.

In the same way he has a list of essential qualities, he also shares a list of beliefs, practices and character traits which would disqualify a person from leadership (1:10-16) Not only is Titus called to NOT appoint people who manifest these disqualifications, he challenges Titus to "silence" them because of the detrimental impact their teaching is having on families.

Teach them the Christian Life (2)

The 2nd chapter of Titus focuses on Paul's charge to "teach what accords with sound doctrine...". By that Paul is primarily concerned with practical matters.



He addresses Christian conduct and behavior among the men and the women as individuals. But also addresses marriage relationships and parenting of children.

Titus is called to model such godly behavior in his own life as an example and so that he cannot be criticized by any evil opponents:

“Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.”

The key for Paul is that the Christian demonstrates in their behavior and witness to the reality of God’s plan of salvation in the Gospel from the present corrupt and evil age.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. Titus 2:11-14

Right Christian behavior flows directly from the outworking of God’s plan of salvation. Jesus is redeeming people from “lawlessness” in order to “purify for himself” a new people who are internally motivated to do “good works”.

Remind them of their witness to the Gospel (3)

Paul’s last section in the letter to Titus places an emphasis on the witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the unredeemed population on Crete. The people of Crete had an insubordinate character. However, it is in their obedience and submission to good order and in engaging in “good work” that the Christians could stand out as a witness for the Gospel.

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. Titus 3:1-2

The transformed life of the Christian is a testimony to the salvation found in Jesus Christ. The converts on Crete were at one time no different in character from the people of their island. However, because of salvation and grace of God and the “washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit”(3:5) these Christians had become “heirs according to the hope of eternal life”(3:7). They must now live into that hope and distinguish themselves from the people of the culture. If anyone doesn’t manifest this character, he shows himself to be “warped and sinful” and “self-condemned”(3:11).

So Titus has his charge: Appoint. Teach. Remind. Good people do good works.