

Titus For Today

HOLY
BIBLE

...for the 21st century

Tabernacle Baptist Church, Penarth

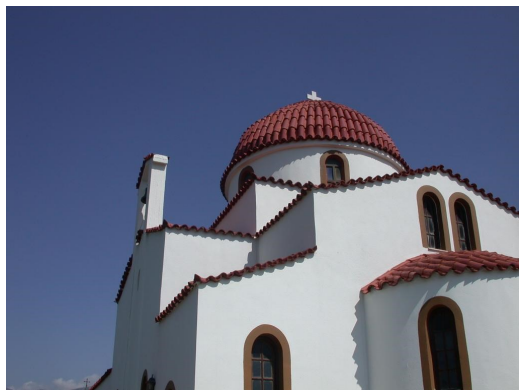
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Introduction to Titus

Titus was a faithful friend and trusted associate of the apostle Paul. Born of Greek parents, Titus was a convert to Christianity at a relatively young age, possibly by means of the preaching of Paul

himself during his travels through much of Greece and Asia Minor (today Turkey).

Although Titus is not recorded specifically by name in the book of Acts, he is mentioned frequently in Paul's epistles. The epistle to Titus is of course written directly to him. Titus was with Paul and Barnabas at Antioch, and accompanied them to the council at Jerusalem where Paul defended his ministry to the Gentiles:

"Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up by revelation; and I laid before them, but privately before those who were of repute, the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, lest somehow I should be running or had run in vain. But even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek." (Galatians 2:1-3) (see also Acts 15:1-35).

Some time later, Titus was with Paul and Timothy at Ephesus, from where he was sent by Paul to Corinth to gather contributions from the church there to help the poor saints at Jerusalem:

"For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, begging us earnestly for the favour of taking part in the relief of the saints - and this, not as we expected, but first they gave themselves to The Lord and to us by the will of God. Accordingly we have urged Titus that as he had already made a beginning, he should also complete among you this gracious work." (2 Corinthians 8:3-6).

Titus later rejoined Paul in Macedonia:

"And besides our own comfort we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his mind has been set at rest by you all. For if I have

expressed to him some pride in you, I was not put to shame; but just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting before Titus has proved true. And his heart goes out all the more to you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, and the fear and trembling with which you received him." (2 Corinthians 7:13-15).

Titus is not again mentioned until a few years later, after Paul's first imprisonment, when he was working with the church in Crete

"To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. This is why I left you in Crete, that you might amend what was defective, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you." (Titus 1:4-5)

The last mention of Titus was when he had left for Dalmatia, after being with Paul at Rome during Paul's second imprisonment. By then, Paul, nearing his martyrdom, was left with only Luke:

"For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me." (2 Timothy 4:6-11)

Study 1:

Titus Chapter 1

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 ²a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, ³and at his appointed season he brought his word 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.

⁵The 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. ⁶An 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. ⁷Since 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. ⁹He 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.

¹⁰For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. ¹¹They 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. ¹²Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." ¹³This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith ¹⁴and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth. ¹⁵To 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. ¹⁶They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

Commentary

The Apostle Paul wrote this letter (epistle) in accordance with the knowledge that God and the Lord Jesus Christ revealed to him. In just one verse Paul outlines that he has three jobs to do as an apostle: First he was sent to build up faith amongst believers, secondly to teach them the 'knowledge of the truth' and thirdly he was to help them move closer to godliness. Sometimes there is an anti-intellectualism amongst Christians which says "oh, I just have a simple faith" as if this is an excuse for not reading, learning, studying, thinking about and discussing our Christian faith. Paul was clear that a deeper knowledge of the truth led to a godly Christian life.

Paul's mission was not his own idea, or even the idea of the Church, but rather it had been entrusted to him by God. However, Paul had been unable to complete the task before he left Crete, and so he has left Titus behind to "straighten out what was left unfinished." Titus has a big job ahead of him! In addition to organizing the new churches and appointing elders, he must also confront and correct the many 'rebellious people' who are leading the new converts astray. What is more, he must do it all in under a year, as Paul instructs him to join him after the winter in Nicopolis on the Greek mainland (Titus 3:12)

Discussion Questions

- V.1 How has the knowledge of the truth led to a godliness in your life?
- V.3 What importance does Paul attach to his own preaching? How important do you think preaching is in your own walk with God?
- V.6 What's the difference between blameless and sinless?
What does it mean to be the husband of one wife?
Why must elder's children be well-behaved believers also?
- V.7 How might you summarize the characteristics outlined in verse 7?
- V.8 Of these characteristics, which are you strongest in?
- V.9 Have you ever been involved in refuting someone who opposes 'sound doctrine'? What happened?
- Vs.10-16 What in particular was the 'group of the circumcision teaching'?
Why was their teaching so damaging to a Gospel faith?
What kind of "Christian" myths that you've heard? Should they be suppressed?
What have you heard from false teachers that should be ignored?

Study 2:

Titus Chapter 2

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

³Likewise, 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. ⁴Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, ⁵to 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.

⁶Similarly, 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 ⁸and 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.

⁹Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, ¹⁰and 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.

¹¹For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. ¹²It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who 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. ¹⁵These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

Commentary

Regarding his pastoral work, Titus was told by Paul to speak the things which become sound doctrine or healthful teaching. This word “sound” is used in 1 Timothy 1:10; 6:3; 2 Timothy 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9,13; 2:2. It is also used in Luke 5:31 and 3 John 2 where the meaning is clear: to be well, healthy, sound in body. God’s truth and God’s teaching, when believed and obeyed, are to produce a soundness and well-being of soul. We often speak of the need to be “healthy believers”—that is, to have spiritual health that comes from walking with God and conforming our lives to His will and Word.

How can we expect to have an impact upon our street, our town, our, our country, and our world if we ourselves are not enjoying the perfect peace and health (the “shalom, shalom” of Isaiah 26:3) that God provides for those trusting in Him? Barrenness and leanness of soul will definitely hinder our outreach. The healthy believer, in contrast to this, is described in John 7:38—“out of his belly (innermost being) shall flow rivers of living water.”

Paul instructed Titus in this chapter to communicate sound and healthful doctrine to five different groups: the older men (v.2), the older women (v.3-4), the younger women (v.4-5), the younger men (v.6-8), and the slaves (v.9-10).

Discussion Questions

- vs 2 Considering these characteristics of godliness, how would you describe a man who is ungodly?
- vs 3-5 What are characteristics of godly women?
What kinds of teaching concerning being a good wife should older women still teach today? Do they?
- vs 6-8 What does this chapter have to teach young men and women in today’s world?
- vs 9-10 This passage teaches Christians how to teach slaves. Is this at all relevant today? If some verses are irrelevant to us, then how can we know which bits we should apply to our lives today, and which bits we can ignore?
- vs 11-14 When did the grace of God teach you to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions? How has your life changed as a result?
- vs 15 What does it mean by "let no one despise you"? Why might Paul feel the need to write this to Titus?

Study 3:

Titus Chapter 3

¹Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, ²to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.

³At 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. ⁴But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, ⁵he 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, ⁶whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, ⁷so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. ⁸This 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.

⁹But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. ¹⁰Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. ¹¹You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

¹²As 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. ¹³Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need. ¹⁴Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives. ¹⁵Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.

Commentary

Biblical Christians are by definition in a predicament. Christians must live in this world, but they are not of this world. As the Father sent Christ into this world to minister, so he sends believers to be ministers in the world (Jn 17:14-18). Titus 3:1-8 is concerned with living in this world. The previous passage stresses engagement in the world, by enforcing Christian respectability in a way that shows sensitivity to accepted social rules and relationships. In chapter 3 the question of the Christian's general attitude toward all people and political

institutions is raised. What is the Christian's obligation in relation to the world--that is, to its unbelieving inhabitants and its political structure? The early church had to deal with this question (1) because it was compelled by Christ's missionary mandate to reach the world with the gospel, a task that requires interaction, and (2) because the political system was generally opposed to the exclusive claims of Christianity. What Paul has to say in Titus 3 is not new, but reflects agreement with both his own earlier thinking and that of 1 Peter 2:13-17. The instruction in chapter 3 divides into four parts: verses 1-2 give the instructions; verses 3-7 give the theological foundation for the behavior that is prescribed; verse 8 adds a missionary motive. The final remarks warn Titus not to be drawn into pointless arguments with 'divisive persons', before closing with some personal comments.

Discussion Questions

vs 1-2 What should a Christian do when the demands of their faith are at odds with the demands of the world? For example, how, as a Church, should we deal with issues such as the sexual orientation legislation and equal opportunities laws?

How do Christians often behave differently around other Christians in church than around non-Christians in the society?

vs 3 To what extent does this describe you before you became a Christian?
To what extent does it still describe you after becoming a Christian?

vs 4-7 What does it mean to be saved? What are we saved from? On what basis are we justified?

What does it mean by the washing of regeneration (rebirth) and renewal by the Holy Spirit?

vs 8 How do these facts motivate a Christian to do good works?

vs 9 What kind of arguments should Christians avoid?

The Greek word for 'devisive person' is pronounced 'hahee-ret-ee-kos' and is the root for our modern word 'heretic.' How should you deal with 'heretics' today?

vs 14 What characterizes the kind of good works Paul refers to?

Study 4:

Titus Today

Titus was written nearly 2,000 years ago to a young man, living in a Greek culture under Roman occupation. It deals with the role and responsibilities of Church leaders, older men, older woman, young men and woman and slaves. It was written to a brand new Church which was being thrown into turmoil by a group of people stirring up dissent. This begs a question (which we could also ask about many other parts of the Bible): Just how relevant is this letter for us in the 21st century?

There are 2 extremes of opinion about how we should handle Biblical texts like these. The first is to say that these words are the inspired and inerrant Word of God, and we must treat every injunction and command as absolute. The other extreme is to say that clearly this was instruction to a specific individual located in a particular culture in time and place, and therefore does not really have any application for us today. How can a passage that deals with slavery, for example (Titus 2:9) have anything to say to us today? If we decide that it is not relevant, then what do we do with the verses immediately before it which say that young women should be ‘busy at home.’ These are important questions about how we properly handle the Word of God, which is unchanging and gives us God’s Word for all times and places.

Some of these questions were raised in a controversial episode of the T.V. drama “The West Wing.” In the scene in question the President of the United States is talking to a room full of reporters, when he sees a particular reporter from a Christian radio show. He asks her a couple of background questions, before launching into the following speech:

BARTLET: I like your show. I like how you call homosexuality an “abomination!”

JACOBS: I don’t say homosexuality is an abomination, Mr. President. The Bible does.

BARTLET: Yes it does. Leviticus!

JACOBS: 18:22.

BARTLET: Chapter and verse. *(Pause)* I wanted to ask you a couple of questions while I had you here. I wanted to sell my youngest daughter into slavery, as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7. She’s a

Georgetown Sophomore, speaks fluent Italian, always cleared the table when it was her turn. What would a good price for her be? While thinking about that,

can I ask another? My chief of staff, Leo McGary, insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2 clearly says he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself? Or is it okay to call the police? Here's one that's really important, because we've got a lot of sports fans in this town. Touching the skin of a dead pig makes one unclean. Leviticus 11:7. If they promise to wear gloves, can the Washington Redskins still play (American) football? Can Notre Dame? Can West Point? Does the whole town really have to be together to stone my brother John for planting different crops side by side? Can I burn my mother in a small family gathering for wearing garments made from two different threads? Think about those questions, would you?

(From "The West Wing" Season 2, Episode 3: "The Midterms")

Discussion Questions

In 1 Corinthians 14:34 Paul writes that, "women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says." In 1 Corinthians 11, when talking about orderly public worship, he says that women must have her head covered when she prays or prophesies.

- Is she a woman allowed to prophesy in church, or should they remain silent?
- How do we hold these two instructions together?
- Should women remain silent in Tabernacle, or is 1 Corinthians 14:34 inapplicable to us today?
- How do we handle other verses which are apparently contradictory? (see also Exodus 21:23-25 and Mathew 5:39; Acts 9:7 and Acts 22:9; Genesis 22:1 and James 1:13)
- How do we handle passages which appear to be culturally irrelevant? (i.e. Owning slaves, stoning people, plucking out our own eyes, using a rod to discipline children - you can probably think of others)

