

Titus

"Our Man in Crete"
(1:1-16)

Context: Titus was a Greek believer (Galatians 2:3). He had served well on special assignments to the church in Corinth (2nd Corinthians 7:13-14, 8:6, 8:16, 8:23, 12:18). He had been won to Christ through Paul's ministry (Titus 1:4) and Paul considered him a partner and fellow worker. People on Crete were not the easiest to work with and Titus became discouraged. Paul had been with Titus on Crete (Titus 1:5) and he left him there to correct some things that were wrong. Since Jews from Crete were present at Pentecost (Acts 2:11), it is possible that they carried the Gospel to their native land. Titus had his problems! The churches needed qualified leaders, and the various groups in the churches needed shepherding. One group of false teachers was trying to mix Jewish law with the gospel of grace (Titus 1:10 & 14), while some of the Gentile believers were abusing God's grace and turning it into a license to sin (Titus 2:11-15). Titus needed extraordinary patience and love. It would have been easy to have "heard God's call," and gone elsewhere. But he was a man who loved God more than self and stuck it out. This letter from Paul is a smaller picture of 1st Timothy. In the first chapter, Paul reminded Titus of his three responsibilities he had to fulfill: (1) preach the word, (2) ordain qualified leaders, and (3) silence false teachers.

Text (1:1-4): **1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, ²in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began ³and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior; ⁴To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.**

Preach God's Word: Paul identifies himself as a servant of God and an apostle, one sent with a commission, of Jesus Christ. Both of these titles focus on Paul's two main concerns; (1) the faith of God's people and (2) the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness. God was using Paul to call out a people for Himself and to teach them the truth which leads to Godly living. In other words, Paul's ministry is aimed at the salvation and sanctification of God's people. Faith and knowledge are resting on the hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised to the elect in eternity past (2nd Timothy 1:9). God's eternal plan consisted of salvaging a people for Himself. Now, God has revealed His purposes by commanding the preaching ministry of Paul, which Paul says, "he has in common with Titus." In other words, just as Paul is to preach the Word of God, so is Titus."

More Text (1:5-9): **⁵This 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— ⁶if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.**

Ordain Qualified Leaders: Paul told Titus to put in order the administrative affairs of the churches. To carry out this directive Titus must arrange for the selection of elders. Paul's direction does not say how this should be done. However, Titus, being Paul's partner and fellow worker, would have been familiar with Paul's preference on this. Acts 14:23 and 2nd Corinthians 8:19 indicate that this process included congregational election characterized by prayer and fasting. The qualifications parallel those qualifications identified in 1st Timothy 3. They include general qualifications, family qualifications, personality qualifications, mental qualifications, spiritual and moral qualifications. The elder must hold to God's Word which is in accordance with the recognized body of Christian truth taught by the apostles (Acts 2:42). Two reasons are given for the elder's adherence to God's Word. First, he must be able to teach sound doctrine. This will go a long way in protecting the people from the attacks of those that teach less than sound doctrine. Secondly, the elder must be able to refute those who contradict sound doctrine. These are continuing functions and they must never be laid aside.

Still More Text (1:10-16): ¹⁰ For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. ¹¹ They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. ¹² One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." ¹³ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. ¹⁵ To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. ¹⁶ They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

Silence False Teachers: It did not take long for false teachers to rise in the early church. Wherever God sows truth, Satan quickly shows up to sow lies. It appears that Titus was facing false teachers that were steeped in Jewish legalism, man-made traditions and mysticism. In 1st Timothy 6, Paul said this about false teachers: (1) They do not agree with sound teaching (v3), (2) They are proud not humble (v4), (3) They love to win the argument (v4), (4) They rob people of the truth (v5a). In the closing passage of Titus 1, Paul first gave three facts about the false teachers: (1) Who they were personally, (2) what they did and (3) why they did it.

With respect to who they were personally, Paul had nothing good to say about these individuals. They would not submit to God's Word nor to the authority of God's servant. They were unruly, vain talkers, they excelled at talking and not doing. With respect to what they did, their teaching was upsetting entire families. They were teaching that one needed to be circumcised to be saved. They were devoting themselves to Jewish myths, things that simply are not true. They were interpreting God's word incorrectly. It has long been said, "when the plain sense of Scripture makes good sense, seek no other sense." With respect to why they did it....filthy lucre....self-gain (v11).

Paul established that these people needed to be silenced and that Titus was not to sit idly by. Rather, he was to exhort and convince them by means of sound doctrine (v9). They were to be rebuked sharply (v13). Paul's desire was to convince these people of the truth of sound doctrine, his doctrine. But while he was doing this, he also needed to protect the church from the false teachings. The best time to attack the false doctrine is right at the beginning before it has time to spread.

Next Week: "How to Have a Healthy Church"