

Titus

Titus 1:1-9

Paul introduces himself in the first 3 verses. Its quite a long and complicated introduction. Notice how he aims at *godliness* (1) and how appropriate that is for a culture like Crete (described in v12) Godliness comes from a *knowledge of the truth* (1) coming from the God *who does not lie* (2) spoken through '*the preaching entrusted*' (3) to his apostle.

He is writing to Titus who has been left with the tough task of straightening out the recently planted church in Crete.

His main task is to appoint elders. V6-9 set out the requirements for those who would lead their churches. The surprising thing is how very little emphasis there is on intellectual ability.

Home life matters. Because the church is the family of God an elder must first be seen to order his own family well. He must be hospitable.

There is an emphasis on restraint: *not quick tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent.* (7) And by contrast "*one who is self controlled disciplined.*" (8) the rest of the requirements are related to character.

Their ministry is to encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. (9)

This is what constitutes the godliness referred to in v1

- What aspect of godliness to you need to work on?
- What is your relationship with 'the truth' like? Do you regard it as something that can form Christ's character in you?
- Pray for the elders to be good at encouraging others by sound doctrine.

Titus 1:10-16

In the second half of the chapter Paul directs Titus in the way he is to preach and teach. The strength of the language is striking. There are those *who are to be silenced* (11) and others are '*to be rebuked sharply*' (13)

He sees the church at risk from Jewish teachers (v10 the circumcision group, v14 Jewish myths)

Its easy to be fairly flippant about Bible teaching as if it's an unfortunate chore. Long sermons are viewed fairly negatively. But Paul wants us to see our homes and families are a product of what we are taught. (11) *they are disrupting whole families by teaching things that ought not to be taught.*

Titus is also alerted to the culture he serves among; '*Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.*' (12) It is recognising the disposition of the locals that gives an edge to these instructions. Where truth is not valued or where over indulgence is the order of the day there will be little appetite for God's word.

Paul uses the phrase '*sound doctrine*' in 1:9 and 2:1 and '*sound in faith*' v14. This is sound as in 'healthy'. If our faith is to be healthy it will be a product of listening to and absorbing healthy teaching.

The outcome though is not intellectual alone. The chapter ends with a reference to 'doing what is good' (16) It will become a theme of the rest of the letter.

- Are you making use of all the opportunities to access Gods word?
- What aspect of our culture do you think poses a threat to the church?
- What sort of things should we pay no attention to?

Titus 2:1-10

Gods word is appropriate to our lives at every stage. Titus's commission (1:5) was to '*put in order what was left unfinished*'. Here is what brings order to our lives and this is the kind of order God requires.

Older men

Those who are older are to exercise restraint: it's there in the words *temperate* and *self controlled*. They are to be the kind of people that others look up to: worthy of respect. They are to be sound in faith, love and endurance as a result of listening to sound teaching. We never outgrow our need to be listening to and submitting to Gods word.

Older and young women.

The gospel brings order to our homes and families. There is a concern here for 'good' marriages and affectionate families. It commends being 'busy at home' (in contrast to being a slanderer or addicted to much wine) Significantly Titus is not to specifically teach the young women (as a group on their own) He is to encourage older women to model the gospel to their younger friends and relations.

Younger men.

Self control is a recurring theme in all the groups so far. Titus's teaching is not all spoken. He is to exemplify what is required by 'doing what is good'

Slaves.

Christian slaves are commissioned with a bigger purpose than just getting through the weeks work. They are by their behaviour to make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive. Note the things that will do that: be submissive not awkward, be trustworthy not deceitful.

- Locate your category and pick a characteristic to work on
- Our lives influence people all the time. Who would you like to influence for good?
- If you work at home, live so no one will malign the word of God. If your work is more formal aim to make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive.

Titus 2:11-15

He sums up this chapter where he has addressed these various groups with a final appeal to godly living. He provides three reasons.

The grace of God has appearedIt teaches us to say No (11)

For all that Jesus Christ was perfectly holy his life was immensely attractive. People were drawn to him. It's true to say that what captures our imagination will draw us in its direction. Ask God to help you see the compelling beauty of Jesus Christ and that it will outshine the sinful pleasures of this world.

Jesus Christ who gave himself to redeem us from all wickedness .. a people that are his very own (14)

The death of Jesus comprises the ransom price paid to redeem us and make us his. The mark of his people is they are 'eager to do what is good'.

While we wait for the blessed hope - the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. (13)

The Bible tells us how to wait: living self controlled, upright and godly lives.

- Are we struggling to say 'No' to unhelpful behaviour? Ask God to help you see how attractive his grace is.
- Look out for opportunities to do some good.
- That Christ came the first time provides encouragement to believe he will return. Do we look like people who are banking on this event taking place?

Titus 3:1-15

One feature of Cretan culture is described in 1:12 as Cretans are always lazy gluttons. This may be why there is such a strong emphasis on 'doing what is good'. The phrase is used 3 times (v1,8,14) in this chapter.

To be ready to do whatever is good. (1)

Christians are to be excellent citizens. Paying their taxes, keeping the speed limit, respecting authority. They are to be people who are conspicuous by their peace loving, considerate and gentle approach to others.

And I want you to stress those things so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. (8)

Once we were enslaved to doing what we wanted. It was an all consuming slavery with no possible escape. But God intervened and not because of righteous things we had done but solely because he is merciful. This act of kindness was accompanied by the lavish gift of the Holy Spirit that was poured out on us. In short he was eager to do us good. Our new found freedom is expressed in serving others and treating them as God has dealt with us.

Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good. (14)

We don't know specifically what Paul wanted Titus to do for Zenas the lawyer or Apollos. What though is clear is Titus was to avoid arguments and quarrels and instead look for practical ways to make a difference. The issue is whether our lives will prove unproductive (14) or useful.

- In the light of v1 look for ways in the mundane and everyday things of life that you can do some good.
- Consider what your life was like before you became a Christian (3) or perhaps what it might be like now if God had never intervened. Thank God for his kindness
- Are there people we could do more to help? (*Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer*)