

THE LETTER OF TITUS

[NCTM study]

Rostrevor Baptist Church; First Term 2004

John D. Calvert

STUDY ONE. Reading: Titus 1: 1-16

Introduction:

Biblical teaching is for life not just study, so the pastoral letters refer to the 'nitty-gritty' of order, discipline and structure. Titus was a Greek (Gentile) and a companion of Paul and first appears in the controversy over whether Gentile converts needed to be circumcised. The Judiazers were pressuring Paul to circumcise Titus; Galatians 2: 1-5, but Paul responded from principle rather than policy. Sometime later Timothy was circumcised; Acts 16: 1ff. His mother was a Jewish believer and his father a Greek. Scholars generally believe that Titus was with Paul and Barnabas when they met the Apostles and if this was the Acts 15 occasion, then the discussion was the conversion of the Gentiles.

Author; most agree that Paul wrote the three pastoral letters (1&2 Timothy & Titus), and that their emphasis is more pastoral than doctrinal. The basic reason for Titus staying in Crete is; 1: 5, and the point that Titus, not the church, appoints elders.

Receipients; In 1: 12, Paul quotes one of their own poets to describe the temperament and culture of these islanders. The Cretans were also notorious for their lack of honesty and integrity. They have been generally described as greedy, indulgent, lazy, and gluttonous, and without scruples as to how they obtained their money. Was Paul tactless or being pointed and real in his assessment to Titus? Such characteristics determined the church problems. Some might suggest that one cannot minister in such a social context, for it is not respectable enough. Heresy was also an issue so strong leadership plus solid teaching was needed was needed. Titus 3: 14 cf. 2: 11-15 indicates the need for such teaching.

Crete; a long, oblong mountainous island south-east of Greece, in the Mediterranean Sea, about 250 km long and between 11 and 56 km wide. Jews from Crete were at Pentecost; Acts 2: 11 and Paul sailed along its coast when going to Rome, Acts 27: 7-21. Apparently a large population for Homer, the Greek philosopher called it, 'The Island of a hundred cities'.

The Pastoral Letters; Read 1 & 2 Timothy along with Titus to appreciate the problems that confronted the churches in Paul's day. Along with 1: 5 cf. Verses 10 & 11. Timothy is also urged to stand firm in the face of similar issues. The two men were different natures with Timothy reluctant and timid and sometimes sick, 1 Corinthians 16: 10 & 11. Titus was a leader and bold, 2 Corinthians 7: 13a-17. Both were greatly used in pastoral ministry for there is no model except our Lord. The apostolic proclamation of Acts had passed and the churches had settled down into a more stable pattern.

There is no suggestion that dynamic proclamation and the expectancy of faith in the Holy Spirit to work should cease but developing churches need steady leadership, teaching and discipline. The temptation is to 'make things happen'. Someone said to me years ago, 'If the Holy Spirit does not do it, then we must'!!

We are the same people during the week as in the church atmosphere although the context is different and as believers we bring personal and family and work matters into church gatherings. Behaviour is particularly seen and heard in church business meetings and other group gatherings. Such 'problems' are linked with our past experiences, temperaments, attitudes, and ambitions; plus our existing ambitions, and ambition is sin.

Be encouraged, there are no perfect churches, leaders, pastors, nor people, etc.

There are KEY words in the book that help us understand why Paul wrote and his emphasis to Titus.

SAVIOUR; occurs six times, twice in each chapter and more than in any other of Paul's letters. Note, 1: 3 & 4; 2: 10 & 13; 3: 4 & 6. In each chapter the first use of *saviour* is applied to the Father and the second occasion to the Son. This reference to the Father as *saviour* is unusual, for the normal reference is to the Son.

DOCTRINE & DEEDS; Note, 1: 9 & 16 [*actions & anything good*]; 2: 1 & 7 & 10 [*teaching*] & 14; 3: 8 & 14. Paul is stressing that Christians demonstrate at least two proofs; sound doctrine and good deeds, and they go together. Good deeds by itself is no better than being a Boy Scout or good citizen. Doctrine without demonstrative lifestyle is dead and a contradiction. So belief affects behaviour and doctrine affects deeds. Unbelievers see any contradiction. The whole letter of Titus is concerned with sound doctrine leading to good deeds.

In chapter 1, sound doctrine leads to good deeds in the church; in chapter 2, to good deeds in the home; and chapter 3, to good deeds in the community.

1. THE GRACE OF THE FATHER & SON (ELECTION) 1: 1-4.

Verses 1 & 2; Paul refers to himself in two aspects. First as a *servant* or *slave* that was at the bottom of the social ladder, and has to carry out their master's will whether they wanted to or not. They were free at the end of seven years and some came to love their masters so much that they entered into voluntary slavery with their ear pierced as a sign. This is in contrast to legalistic teaching about obedience that becomes a burden with moralism eventuating. Jesus said, *No one can serve two masters*, but it is also true that no man or woman cannot serve one. Make up our mind!!

Then he adds, an *apostle*, a sent one, and an ambassador of Christ. Followed by, *the faith of God's elect* ...cf. 2 Timothy 1: 9 & 10 & Ephesians 1: 4 & 5. ... Some people oppose the idea of God's will being supreme and sovereign, but Scripture says it, so don't waste time trying to argue or reconcile what is!! Then, *the knowledge of the truth ... that leads to godliness* ... Truth is God Himself, not a system. We cannot have a false god and not be false. So we are what we worship, John 14: 6.

Verse 2, *faith and knowledge ...resting ... the hope of eternal life ...* Hope is not working ourselves up to believe something in the future; Christ is our hope and He is certain; 1 Peter 1: 3. Some folk relate to things whereas the believer relates to the Lord. Then, *God, who does not lie*, etc. Putting these verses together we see that there is no truth apart from **action**. Facts are not the truth for immoral people use facts. We can mistake our knowledge about God for knowledge of God.

Verses 3 & 4; God initiated action, *and at his appointed season he brought his word to light*. This is real so we must beware of relating to experiences and imagining that is truth or the word or knowledge. Some try to convince themselves that something is real or true, and even say that faith is a leap in the dark. Faith must have an object and that is Christ. All happened in Christ, so what happened then, happens now. The action of the king and the kingdom comes through in the proclamation, and the proclamation is the announcing; 1 Corinthians 1: 21. The word is Christ Himself who formed the gospel through His death and resurrection, and that word is dynamic now, and is *entrusted to me* (us), not committed. God does not call us to commit or pledge ourselves, we have an entrustment, *by the command of God our Saviour*.

Linked to this is Paul's emphasis that the word came to *light through the preaching entrusted*. We come under the impact of the word through preaching and its truth confronts us and we must listen, Romans 10: 14 & 15. We all need the action of God and are called to obey and live in the freshness of His action.

Never focus on how 'bad' or 'good' we were or are. That is nonsense and leads us into quagmires. God takes hold of us and entrusts us with the gospel, cf. 1 Corinthians 9: 16f. Any push to try harder or do better is not the gospel for that focuses on self-effort rather than living in obedience.

The command of God, not the challenge, comes to us with the message that commands are very stabilising and securing, not legal; God's directives free us from bondage. So we are to obey, cf. 2 Thessalonians 2: 13-15, 1 Peter 4: 19 (NIV uses *commit*, but it is *entrust*). Commit is an emphasis on us to act and is not N.T. teaching.

Verse 4; my *true son* = authentic, spiritual child. *Grace and peace* is not just a greeting, for grace is great grace, there is no special grace. We are reminded of the means of grace through prayer, bible reading, the Lord's Supper, offerings, etc., but **not** the means to grace. There is no impediment to grace and we cannot detach grace from God. *Saviour*, includes Lordship and not a further step of devotion.

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STUDY TWO. Reading: Titus 1: 5-16

Introduction:

Review the emphasis of verse 5, where Titus is instructed by Paul to do two things; *straighten out* and *appoint*. Verses 6-9 are concerned with *appointing* and verses 10-16 with amending or *straighten out*. Verses 6-9 with doctrine and 10-16 with action, so the same pattern continues as mentioned last study. The danger of perfectionism; for there will always be things to amend but law pressure will never heal, grace does.

Paul and Titus had been in Crete and travelled to various towns proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. People came to faith, groups of believers had been established and met for worship, the Lord's Supper, prayer, study, and fellowship. But they have no elders, no appointed leaders and are wide open to incorrect teaching and influence. Leaders must not be appointed in a hurry and Paul had delayed doing this until it was clear whom the Spirit of God was developing for leadership. Personality, possessions, prestige, business ability, family influence are not the criteria for eldership.

Elders, pastors and bishops are the same and there is no thought of a one-man ministry here or anywhere else in Scripture. The ecclesiastical idea of bishops, overseers and archbishops and other ministerial titles developed through the numerical, administrative and pastoral growth of the church but they are not CEO's or GM's or autocrats. The church is not a business even though business methods can assist in administration. Paul continues, *as I directed you*, which is not advice but an apostolic command. However, we don't like people over us, and we buck at authority, 1 Thessalonians 5: 12; Hebrews 13: 7 & 17; 1 Peter 5: 1-5.

Elders: No therapies then as today and some counselling aspects are helpful; however, the word proclaimed does its own work. There are people who collect counsellors and therapies like stamp collecting. The emphasis in the Scriptures is on responsibilities not holders of office. Some leaders are not elder material. Older men and their experiences of life is significant in respect to being elders, although age is not the watertight criterion. There is a vital ministry for women, so we are not being sexist, but elders were generally men.

Authority, as in our families, is demonstrated in love. Elders are similar to the heads of tribes and families, but this is not a pattern of superiority and inferiority. Exodus 3: 16 & 18; Acts 14: 21-23, 20: 18-35; Titus 1: 6-9, cf. 1 Timothy 3: 1-7 & 5: 17-19; Revelation 4: 4 & 10. Churches need Godly, spiritually minded mature men and women. The importance of being grounded in grace is vital so we see the grace of eldership.

Verse 6; *blameless*, not into wrong. Not that we never fail but our thrust is not away from grace. *Husband of one wife*, a married man who understands family situations, but not necessarily some brilliant theologian. Dangers for the young, or unmarried or widowed. This does not exclude those who have never married or those remarried after widowed, but rather the polygamous and those remarried after divorce. *His children believe*; he has gone through the mill but we can fail as parents. Parents are responsible for the belief and behaviour of their children, but as adults our children are finally responsible for their own lifestyles. So, not *wild and disobedient*, incorrigible like the prodigal son.

Verse 7, in the next two verses Paul uses eleven terms, five negative and six positive to show characteristics of someone who has not come under authority; cf. 1 Corinthians 4: 1 & 2. We cannot demonstrate authority if we don't come under authority. The problem of anger with others reveals our anger to God. The person who is against authority is the one who is desperate for authority. *Drunkness*, can't tell an alcoholic what to do, *violent and dishonest gain*; what's in it for me, or, I have my rights no matter what.

The opposite in verse 8 is not perfectionist standards. If these apply to us then the answer is the gospel, ie. **FORGIVENESS**. Note, *hospitality*, the ministry of the home. *One who loves what is good*; straightforward rather than delving into the latest weird therapies, groups, courses, and books, new age gimmicks that capture our minds. Then *self-controlled*, for we are *holy* through the cross and resurrection, and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Self discipline is our responsibility.

Verse 9, *must hold firmly*, get a good grip of the substance of this word for it is alive. The word has to burn within us before it can come through us. Paul is not setting up a patten; rather our openness and willing obedience to the truth is presented. Therefore, hold tight *to the trustworthy message*. There was no N.T. in those days, although there were writings. We can draw attention to ourselves rather than to the word; cf. 1 Corinthians 2: 1-10. The danger is to talk or teach or preach mere words because we have the gift of the gab. Because the word is dynamic it has to be lived out. Then, *encourage others by sound doctrine*, for that is alive teaching that fits the human situation not heavy academic stuff that fries the brain. Then *refute those who oppose it*, for there are some who always refuse the truth. This highlights our responsibility as believers for if we keep silent we agree with them.

Verses 10-16; *rebellious, mere talkers and deceivers*, cf. 2 Timothy 3: 13, for the attraction of deception is at us each day. Sooner or later the truth catches up with us, so what the Bible says is either the truth or it is not; cf. Ephesians 4: 12-14.

Then, *the circumcision group*, who seek to impose the law in a folk law and occultist manner. Verse 11, *they must be silenced*; cf. 1 Timothy 3: 8 & 9. Verse 12, Epimenedes, 630-500 BC; they are like animals. Verse 13, *This testimony is true*; all truth is of God whatever its portrayal and context ... *rebuke*, stand up to them with the strong corrective word in love, *so that they will be sound in the faith*. Verses 14 & 15, The matter of purity, and the mind video of fantasising, cf. Isaiah 29: 13-15. Do I have a pure heart?

Temptation is not sin, but note that, *both their minds and consciences are corrupted*; cf. Hebrews 9: 14 & 13: 18. The aim in this emphasis was not to humiliate the Cretans but to bring the truth to them and rescue them from error so they are established in the truth. Verse 16; so, *they claim to know God*; cf. Romans 1: 18, 24, 26 & 28; Hebrews 10: 26 & 27 & Colossians 2: 20-23. Their actions give the lie and deny their words.

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STUDY THREE. Reading: Titus 2: 1-15

Introduction:

In verse 1 the NIV does not translate *but as for you*, but such words emphasise the distinctive role Titus has by contrast to those mentioned previously. *You* is emphatic grammar for his teaching and behaviour is entirely unlike the false teachers whose actions deny their profession. *Sound doctrine* means healthy doctrine and is linked with hygiene and wholeness. These words, used five times in the Pastorals, reveal that the people of God are different from the culture around them. Titus is not to be vague or teach generalisations, but lay down solid, concrete doctrine that results in wholesome living. Verses 1-5, cf. 1 Timothy 5: 1-5. This is in contrast to the false teachers in 1: 10-16, for verse 11 says *they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach*. Relationships are familial whether we live in a family or not, for we are in the family of the Father. The older men are to be the pattern or set the pattern for others. What was lost in the fall is restored in the cross, so we can function as true men and women. Some of the issues we face today in familial aspects are seen in the picture of authority and submission as in chapter 1 with elders. Today there are matters of social justice and a feminist emphasis and those against that view, in the context of evangelical theology. We all have presuppositions and bias in belief and emphasis.

Here is a picture of godly parents and the link in verses 6-8 with children and young people. Parenting is the hardest task in the world and the most wonderful responsibility. The whole community is to minister to one another. Verse 6 and 2 *temperate*; ie. self-controlled, so the fruit of the spirit. But we start with grace and fatherhood, not with relationships. The foundation from which we begin is vital. If we commence from parental or other family problems our view is horizontal. When our Lord is understood as the true parent our view is vertical. Then the horizontal is seen from the vertical relationship. Some practical advice can be helpful but there remains the battle each day to live in the truth. Good deeds follow sound doctrine otherwise we have not heard, or deliberately rejected the truth and its practice. So verses 1-10 refers to households and the groups in those households, which is more expansive than our domestic use of family. Focus on verses 2-5.

Some older people, both men and women, are childish and immature, for they never grow up and accept responsibility. Sadly their conversation and behaviour is shallow, emotional, sulky and manipulative. Eg. Parents who attempt to outdo their children in dress, cars, furniture, and who follow them to church, suburb, and holidays. Tension can arise between old and young because the old forget what they were like in their youth and expect children and teenagers to be mature beyond their years. Titus is to teach the older men, older women and young men; but the older women teach the young women.

Love is the key in marriage, not in emotion but in service. *To be busy at home*, means working at home; home makers and not neglect home responsibilities. This is not some stay-at-home instruction nor against women working outside the home as professionals, etc. Paul's concern is women being idle at home and spending the day to the neglect of the home. For men and women the question is relevant; how have I spent the time today? The vocation of marriage brings new responsibilities to husband and wife.

Verse 5, This is so with unbelieving husbands also, for *to be subject to their husbands*, is not inferiority, nor an autocrat, but recognition of God's created order of male headship of responsibility and care. Note 5b, *so that no one will malign the word of God*.

Verses 6-8; The parallel with younger women; Titus has to set the example; *encourage ... self-controlled ... example ... in your teaching show integrity*. Cf. 1 Corinthians 11: 1 & 4: 16.

Verse 9; The reference is to household slaves, cf. Ephesians 5: 21 & 1 Corinthians 11: 2, the principle of hierarchy not egalitarianism. Our temptation is constantly to assert ourselves and we don't mind how many are under us. But all relationships have to be lived under grace for breakdowns are caused by self-promotion. The answer is the constraint of love that only comes from God. **Verse 10**; *attractive*, cosmetic, arranging jewels so as to display their beauty. We could be down hearted because of our failures, but verse 11 reminds us of grace.

Verses 11-15; *For*; this is not a new section but links with what has been said. Grace is the personal dynamic of God that is never absent from a Christian. When we fail, and we all fail, we think grace has disappeared, but grace is always fresh to us. But we want to succeed even without grace as a 'I did it my way' philosophy. God's grace is never detached from God, for He always comes to us to do us good. Grace is love in action and even judgment is an act of God, not punishment. Acts 4: 29-35; *great grace* (much grace) in verse 33, cf. 11: 23. Acts 14: 26 *commended to the grace of God*. Salvation is grace from beginning to end and is liberating not educative, *even though it teaches us*; cf. Ephesians 2: 5 & 8; & John 1: 16-18. We are secure in the covenant of grace despite at times feeling guilty. Paul's testimony in 1 Timothy 1:12-15.

Old Testament people did not come to God by obeying the law, none of them could. Philippians 3: 9, shows that we can only live in the righteousness that comes from justification, cf. Romans 3: 21 ff. We are free to live life to the full, and don't ever need to do bargains with God, for they don't work, cf. Romans 5: 12-19. What Adam did *meant death came to all men, because all sinned*; then all that Christ did is credited to us. See, Romans 5: 20 & 21. There is nothing we have done or will do that the Cross has not knocked out totally. Remember, just knowing the doctrine does not mean we are Christians.

Note, *grace ... has appeared*, cf. 1 John 1: 1 & 2, & 2 Timothy 1: 9 & 10. Nothing was left unfinished on the Cross. All the sin of all people has been dealt with but not all come to faith in Christ. The gospel is preached to all and we leave the results with God, cf. Acts 13: 38 & 39. Note, *the grace of God that brings salvation ...* We are saved and are being saved and will be saved.

Verse 12; grace continues for *it teaches us* [and disciplines us] ... *and to live*. [Story; the slave who was bought, keep threatening never to obey, released from his chains and was released, and promised to serve his master, freely]. Authority is always contested, and if we don't come under grace and live by grace we will always have problems with authority. Grace is mentioned in the Old Testament (loving-kindness), and in the New Testament the emphasis is always personal,

hence the appearing of Christ through the incarnation and His grace is always operating. We can never go outside grace; Romans 5: 20 & 21.

Verse 13; *hope* is certainty in what God has said, a fixed assurance, not emotionalism, cf. 1 Peter 1: 3-5; Romans 5: 1-5 & 8: 22-25. Beware the danger of manufacturing human hope. Note; *the glorious appearing*.

Verses 14 & 15; *who gave himself for us*, cf. Galatians 1: 3 & 4. Note; *to redeem us from all wickedness*. See, Romans 6: 11-14. To buy us back and set us free from the dominion of sin. The truth is not some dusty past however real then, but the reality now. Then, *and to purify for himself*, cf. Hebrews 1: 3. Purify means that the old heart is made new and we can live and serve. So don't worry about the past, don't have post mortems, tell the ghosts to get lost; cf. 1 Corinthians 6: 9-11. We are *eager to do what is good* because we *are his very own*. We can serve Him with a clear conscience when we know we are purified, otherwise we are actors; cf. Colossians 1: 19-22. Then; **verse 15**.

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STUDY FOUR. Reading: Titus 3: 1-15

Introduction:

Verses 1 & 2; These reminders link with 1: 5 and 2: 11, so Titus reminds the Cretans of what they had been taught and so know as citizens, and which need to be carried out in society; cf. Romans 13 & 1 Peter 2: 13-17 & Acts 5: 29. Crete had been taken over by Rome in 67 BC and had been restive under such colonial rule ever since. Christians are to be law-abiding citizens and accept the authority of leaders and rulers. Such ethical behaviour spills over to others. Then *to slander no one*, character assassination, gossip, even prayer points!! Good manners, but social courtesies have changed, and maybe not for the best.

Verses 3-8; Titus does not hide descriptions of an unbeliever in verse 3. Those described as *foolish, disobedient*; no sense, so mental and moral depravity. Linked with, *deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions, pleasures*; these passive verbs illustrate that we could not control the evil forces. The deceit of sin is built in to all evil, and those described are outside of Christ. Such people live in *malice and envy*, which cause disruptions. Such behaviour also captures unbelievers when the truth is refused, and results in *being hated and hating one another*, which results in hostility that is experienced and reciprocated; cf. Romans 1: 28-31. If our relationship with God is fractured it is fractured with others, and sadly this occurs in the church.

How can anyone escape from such a mindset and lifestyle and exchange addiction for freedom? Salvation does not come from within like New Age philosophy of looking within oneself and seeking for our own resources. Self-effort does not work, only the personal experience of grace and salvation enables him (and us) to instruct others for this is what we have been saved from.

Verses 4-7 are a single sentence and show the wonderful contrast. The main verb is in verse 5, *he saved us*, and we cannot trivialise salvation; 1 John 4: 14 & Luke 19: 10. We are sinners under the wrath of a Holy God. Now, *the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared*; cf. 2: 11 & 13. So, **verse 5**, His saving act in the cross and resurrection. From what has He saved us and to what has He saved us? Then, *not because of righteous things we had done*, and this is true before and after salvation. We have no righteous acts by which to impress God and we cannot work at righteousness after we are saved. Our call is to obedience, not to do our part in helping God do His.

We don't work to be justified or saved, but we work because we are saved and justified. It is all *because of his mercy*, which does not mean pity. There are four particular nouns in this sentence; *He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*

Washing; signified baptism but not baptismal regeneration.

Rebirth; radical new beginning in which we are made all new, not a repair job.

Renewal; the rebirth of transformation, not some extra work.

Holy Spirit; God Himself, the one through whom we are reborn.

Linking **verse 6**, we see; *the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour*. Paul is not talking about two works of grace, nor some extra of the Spirit added to the work of the cross, or a second experience. The words, *poured out on us*, refer to the pouring out, the coming of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, and *on us* is our personal participation. The work of the cross and the coming of the Spirit is one event in our lives even though there may be one or more or many experiences after conversion. There is no doctrine of renewal so, *renewal* here is not some extra, it is all tied in together; cf. Romans 12: 2 & Colossians 3: 10. So go on being renewed in the Spirit. Then also at conversion, *the Holy Spirit whom he poured out on us generously*; cf. Ephesians 1: 7 & 8.

Verse 7 reminds us that we are not justified by faith but, *justified by his grace*, for this is God's gift received by faith which is also His gift; 2: 11-14. Note that in salvation there are parallel and concurrent works of God which are never separated.

1] justification which signifies that God declares us righteous through His Son dealing with all our sin in His death on the cross. This is our new status.

2] regeneration, by which he makes us righteous by His indwelling Holy Spirit. This is our new birth.

And, *heirs having the hope of eternal life*. What richness we have in Christ. **Verse 8** automatically follows for Titus is *to stress these things*; why? For believers to emphasise good works that show we are people of grace. Meaning, *be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good*. Good works are never the basis of salvation but the necessary evidence, and the expression occurs fourteen times in the Pastorals.

Verses 9-11, good advice; cf. 1 Timothy 6: 3-5 & 2 Timothy 2: 16-18.

Verses 12-15, see Ephesians 6: 21. Note **verse 14**, the danger of an unproductive life; cf. John 5: 17. **Verse 15**; *GRACE BE WITH YOU ALL*.