

The letter to Titus

Jacob J. Scholtz, 2 August 2016

Background and dates

After the apostle Paul's first imprisonment in Rome ended in about AD 61-62, the Lord strengthened the apostle to proclaim the message of the gospel so that all the Gentiles might hear it (cf. 2 Tim 4:17).¹ During the next five or so years (AD 62-67), Paul was very active, visiting at least Macedonia, Ephesus, Crete, Nicopolis, Troas, Corinth and Miletus (1 Tim 1:3; 2 Tim 4:13, 20; Tit 1:5; 3:12). As an 'old man' (Phlm 9), Paul was concerned that the truth of the gospel be preserved and passed on to future Christians (Litfin 1983:729). For this reason, Titus and Timothy were supplied with letters certifying that they were the apostle's personal representatives (Hiebert 1957:9). The pastoral letters emphasize the life and leadership of local churches as well as godliness and good works. Titus and 1 Timothy are 'companion epistles', probably written close together sometime during AD 63-66 (Hiebert 1957:7).² 2 Timothy was written just before Paul died as a martyr during his second imprisonment in Rome (AD 67-68), the Lord bringing Paul 'safely into his heavenly kingdom' (2 Tim 4:18).

Message of the letter to Titus

The content of the faith that God's elect shares is a body of doctrine that leads to the acknowledgement of the truth which accords with godliness in hope of eternal life which God promised (1:1-2). But who will proclaim and teach this? The apostle commands Titus to appoint elders (1:5-9) who would not only exhort and refute by sound doctrine (2:1-10; 2:15-3:3, 8), but who would also be a pattern of good works themselves (cf. 2:7, 10). If this is achieved in local churches on a difficult island such as Crete (cf. 1:12), then it can be achieved anywhere else in the world; if the doctrine of God our Saviour can be adorned by individual Cretan slaves, then it can be done by any Christian (cf. 2:9-10). But who provides the power and enablement? It is the grace of God that teaches Christians this as we await the blessed hope and appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ who purifies us (2:11-14; cf. 3:4-7). What is therefore the responsibility of local churches and individual Christians? Local churches will be powerful only to the extent that God's revealed truth is proclaimed and demonstrated; believers must adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things through our works (2:10). Local church leaders must refute and rebuke those who promote false doctrine and ungodliness (1:10-16; 3:9-11). And other Christians in the local church, what are they to

¹ References to Titus will be indicated only by chapters and verses. Quotations from Scripture are taken from the NJKV.

² For a minority view that the letter to Titus was written before Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, in the mid-to-late AD 50's, see Walker (2012).

do? 'Godliness is the intended end product of the gospel' and therefore church members are to proclaim 'God's truth in the world by their godly lives and verbal witness' (Constable 2016:3, 5).

Structure of the letter to Titus

After considering various outline proposals, this chiasmic structure will be used in our study of the letter to Titus.³

A Salutation 1:1-4

B Instructions regarding elders, sound doctrine 1:5-9

C Refute false teachers and their teachings 1:10-16

D Speak sound doctrine to various groups 2:1-10

X The grace of God has appeared 2:11-14

D' Speak and exhort sound doctrine 2:15-3:3

X' The kindness and love of God have appeared 3:4-7

DD' Affirm sound doctrine and good works 3:8

C' Reject false teachers and their teachings 3:9-11

B' Instructions regarding other workers, good works 3:12-14

A' Benediction 3:15

A) Salutation 1:1-4

1 ¹Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgement of the truth which accords with godliness, ²in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, ³but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Saviour; ⁴To Titus, a true son in our common faith: grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Paul introduces himself as a *doulos*, a **bondservant of God**. A Hebrew slave served for six years, but was set free in the seventh year (Lev 21:2). If the slave, however, says that 'I love my master' and chose to stay, then the slave would by his (or her) own volition serve the master forever (Lev 21:5-6). It is a high honour to be called the bondservant of God (cf. Jos 14:7; Ps 89:3; 2 Ki 10:10; Rev 15:3). Are all bondservants of God also called apostles? No, but Paul is. Paul is not only a *doulos* of God, but also **an apostolos of Jesus Christ**. An apostle was an ambassador of Christ, a messenger sent under specific orders, a high honour indeed (cf. 1 Cor 9:1; 2 Cor 12:11-12). After being set free from the slave-market of sin, Paul says 'it is not I who live, but Christ lives in me' (Gal 2:20; cf. 3:13; 4:5).⁴ Ever since he was called on that road

³ Smith (n.d.) proposes a criss-cross chiasmus around which the letter is built.

⁴ If we have been bought by Christ (1 Cor 6:19-20; 1 Pet 1:18-19), do we belong to ourselves or should we also, willingly, become slaves of God? If yes, do we do the will of our Master or do we please ourselves (cf. 2 Cor 5:15)?

to Damascus, this Hebrew of the Hebrews is serving Christ (Acts 26:2-23). As the Servant of Jehovah said when He sent his apostles for the first time, 'He who receives you [the apostles] receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me' (Mat 10:40; cf. 12:18).

If Titus already knew all this, why did Paul mention it? Those who heard this letter being read in local churches on the island of Crete would recognise that Titus was the authorised representative of the apostle to the Gentiles. The authority given to the bondservant and apostle is **according to the faith of God's elect**, the one faith which has specific content, a specific set of doctrines and practices (cf. Eph 4:5; Jude 3). This faith acknowledges (or knows) the truth which produces something. It leads to **the acknowledgement of the truth which accords with godliness**. Not all truth has a definite effect, but this faith and its truth leads to godliness, an increasing conformity to the image of God's Son (cf. Rom 8:29; 1 Tim 3:16). But it does more, for all Paul's ministry efforts is with a view to **hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began**. Eternal life is a gift of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 6:23), a present possession to be realised in all its fullness later to those who already 'know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent' (Jn 17:3; cf. 1 Cor 13:12; Heb 11; 1 Jn 5:11-12). This one true God is the same **God who cannot lie**, probably mentioned by Paul to contrast God's truthful character with the lying habits of the Cretans (1:12).

God not only promised eternal life **before time began**, but He has **in due time manifested His word through preaching** (1:3; cf. 2 Tim 1:9). In time past God spoke in various times and in various ways to the fathers by the prophets — the 'Word of the Lord came unto [the prophet] and said...' — but now Jesus Christ, the Word Himself, was manifested and is preached through the gospel (1:3; 2:11; 3:4; cf. Heb 1:1-4). It is this good news of Christ that was **committed to me** (1:3b; cf. Acts 9:15-16; Gal 1:10-24).⁵ This was done **according to the commandment** from God the Father, frequently described as **God our Saviour** in the pastoral letters (1 Tim 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Tit 1:3; 2:10; 3:4). As the bondservant of God, Paul preached this gospel in season and out of season (cf. 2 Tim 4:2). God the Holy Spirit would later even inspire Paul to write of a future time when people will not endure sound doctrine, turning away from the truth and unto fables (2 Tim 4:3-5). But the promise of eternal life is based on the sure promises of God for whom it is impossible to lie.

Titus, a true son in our common faith (1:3), became a believer either as a result of Paul's ministry in Antioch of Syria or during Paul's first missionary journey. Soon thereafter, Titus accompanied Paul and Barnabas to the meeting in Jerusalem, acting as 'Exhibit A' of how God saved a Gentile who need never be circumcised in terms of the Mosaic covenant (cf. Acts 15:1,

⁵ We are today called to do the same by making disciples (Mat 28:18-20).

3, 5; Gal 2:1-3; Fruchtenbaum 2005:9). As the apostle's protégé, Titus was a partner and co-worker who walked in the same spirit and steps as Paul (cf. 2 Cor 2:13; 8:23; 12:18). Titus was the 'go-to man' for delicate and difficult assignments. As the apostle's representative, Titus not only collected money for the poor believers in Jerusalem (2 Cor 7:6-16; 8:1-24), but he also carried a 'severe letter' to the Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor 12:18). After working with Paul among Cretans who were described as 'liars, evil beasts and lazy gluttons' (1:12), Titus was commanded to set in order the things that are lacking and to appoint elders (1:5), remaining there until Paul could send others to Crete before Titus could re-join Paul in Nicopolis (3:12). Titus was therefore a trustworthy son and brother who shared the same faith that all believers in Christ share, the faith once and for all delivered unto the saints (cf. Jude 3).⁶

The benediction is first **grace**, for if God did not freely give us that which we can never earn, none of us could live. Moreover, in God's **mercy** we also do not receive what our sinful deeds deserve. **Grace** and **mercy** result in God's **peace**. Jesus said, 'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you (Jn 14:27).⁷ This blessing is not only from **God the Father** but also from **the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour**. Previously God the Father was described as our Saviour (1:3), but now the Lord Jesus Christ is likewise described as *Soter*, as Saviour (1:4; cf. 2:13; 3:6) — for they are both involved in providing the gift of salvation, as is God the Holy Spirit, as this letter to Titus will later make clear (3:5).

In this lengthy salutation, Paul emphasised not only his apostolic authority, but also a specific message. The message which permeates this letter from the very first verse onwards is about sound doctrine (**acknowledgement of the truth**) and good works (**which accords with godliness**). While the authority and message is from God, Titus will be commanded, as Paul's representative, to do certain things. If the churches can be established and grow by God's enabling power in a difficult place such as Crete, then it can be replicated anywhere else in the world. As this short letter will make clear, this is possible because **the grace of God that brings salvation appeared to all**, the **kindness and love of God our Savior toward man has appeared** (2:11; 3:4).

⁶ Titus was with Paul towards the very end of the apostle's life, but then Paul sent Titus to Dalmatia (or Illyricum), which is east of northern Italy across the Adriatic Sea (2 Tim 4:10). Dalmatia/Illyricum may refer to modern-day Slovakia or parts of modern Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and northern Albania (Constable 2016:2).

⁷ The meaning of *shalom* (peace) includes peace, tranquillity, safety, well-being, welfare, wholeness, comfort, health, contentment, success and integrity (original perfect state).

B) Instructions regarding elders, sound doctrine 1:5-9

⁵For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you —⁶if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. ⁷For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not give to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, ⁸but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, ⁹holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

At some stage Paul and Titus brought the gospel of Christ to the inhabitants of the island of Crete (1:5). Paul then continued his third missionary journey, but (temporarily) left Titus behind. With Paul writing probably from Nicopolis (3:12), Titus is commanded to do two, if not three things. First, by using a Greek verb *epidiorthēsē* for the action to **set in order the things that are lacking**, Titus was to provide ‘positive instruction in doctrine and Christian living’ (Hiebert 1957:30) — just like a doctor who sets broken bones or straightens out crooked ones (Guzik 2006). Second, Titus was to **appoint elders in every city**, a command previously given privately (**as I commanded you**), but now Paul invested Titus with written authority to act as explained further in verses 6-9. In addition to these two tasks, when the letter arrived Titus was to **send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing** (3:13). This work was to continue until **Artemas** or **Tychicus** arrived (3:12). At that stage, after he had served on the island of Crete, Titus was to re-join Paul in Nicopolis (3:12). The table below summarises 17 qualifications for an elder that are mentioned in Titus.⁸

Qualification	Meaning	References
Blameless (Greek: <i>anegkletos</i> ; mentioned twice)	No obvious flaw in character or conduct. Nothing to ‘take hold upon’ to attack his life or that local church. No scandal.	Titus 1:6; cf. 1 Tim 3:2
The husband of one wife (Gr. <i>mias gunaikos aner</i>)	One-woman man. Elder focuses attention on one woman, i.e. his wife. Elder can be unmarried.	Titus 1:6; cf. 1 Tim 3:2
Having faithful children (Gr. <i>tekna echon pista</i>) not accused of dissipation (Gr <i>asotia</i>) or insubordination	Children should not rebel against the authority of their father. Dissipation means riotous living (cf. Lk 15:13). Does this refer to believing children or to children that are faithful to obey the leader of the house? I think the latter.	Titus 1:6; cf. Lk 15:13; 1 Tim 3:4-5, 12;
A steward of God	The elder acts as a steward of God. The greater the Master, the greater the servants are expected to and the more responsibilities they the servants have.	Titus 1:7; cf. Mk 10:41-45; 1 Cor 3:5-9; 4:1-2
Not self-willed (Gr. <i>me authade</i>)	Not selfish, arrogant, stubborn, proud, over-bearing.	Titus 1:7; cf. 1 Tim
Not quick-tempered (Gr. <i>me orgilon</i>)	Not soon angry or contentious. Must not have a settled state of anger.	Titus 1:7; cf. 1 Tim 3:2-3

⁸ Sources consulted in compiling this table include Guzik (2006) and Constable (2016:10-13).

Not given to wine (Gr. <i>me paroinon</i>)	Don't drink more than is proper.	Titus 1:7; cf. 1 Tim 3:3
Not violent (Gr. <i>me plekten</i>)	Neither violent in action nor in speech. No browbeating others.	Titus 1:7; cf. 1 Tim 3:3
Not greedy for money (Gr. <i>me aischrokerde</i>)	Free from the love of money. Not trying to profit out of Christian service.	Titus 1:7; cf. 1 Tim 3:3, 8; 6:7-8, 17-19
Hospitable (Gr. <i>philexenon</i>)	No hotels at that stage like we have today, so Christians provided shelter to others.	Titus 1:8; cf. 1 Tim 3:2
A lover of what is good (Gr. <i>philagathon</i>)	Not the base and sordid things of this world, but that which is good.	Titus 1:8
Sober-minded (Gr. <i>sophrona</i>)	Think clearly and with clarity. Prudent. Can have a sense of humour, but not foolish behaviour. Paul referred to sober-mindedness 10 times in the Pastoral letters.	Titus 1:8; cf. 1 Tim 3:2
Just (Gr. <i>dikaion</i>)	Right towards men, upright, fair, just.	Titus 1:8
Holy (Gr. <i>hosion</i>)	Right towards God, set apart to God.	Titus 1:8
Self-controlled (Gr. <i>egkrate</i>)	Right towards self, disciplined, temperate.	Titus 1:8
Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught	Committed to God's truth and not depart from it. Have been under the teaching of someone else. Able to bring the Word of God to people with confidence and authority. Conserve the truth and also preserve the truth, be it from dilution, deletion or distortion.	Titus 1:9; 1 Tim 3:2
Able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict	Can encourage (exhort) others with the Scriptures but also discourage (convict) others who are on the wrong track. This means pointing out the error of false teaching and why it is wrong.	Titus 1:9; cf. 1 Tim 3:2

C) Refute false teachers and their teachings 1:10-16

¹⁰For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. ¹²One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." ¹³This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. ¹⁵To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. ¹⁶They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

Verse 10 flows easily from the end of the previous verse ('for'). To be insubordinate is to resist authority or control. The false teachers do not want to submit to the sound doctrine mentioned in verse 9. These insubordinates are either vain talkers — meaning they utter empty, senseless things which are useless — or they are deceivers ('mind-misleading'). Since they were *especially those of the circumcision*, one can infer that the false teachers were mostly of Jewish origin, but there were also false teachers of Gentile origin. The **mouths** of the false teachers **must be stopped**; the picture is to muzzle or bridle their mouths. This is of course the very opposite of the picture for the good teachers: 'For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle

an ox while it treads out the grain”, and “The labourer is worthy of his wages” (1 Timothy 5:18). The text does not say how the false teachers should be reduced to silence, but the context in Titus emphasises sound doctrine, so the truth of God’s Word is to be used to shut them up (cf. Hebrews 4:12-13). By teaching what they ought not, false teachers subverted (overthrow, overturn) whole households (families), probably gained a following and these followers may have eventually paid these false teachers money (**dishonest gain**, filthy lucre).

The indictment in Titus 1:12 is severe. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul selects a saying from Epimenides, a native of *Gnossus* in Crete who lived in 600 B.C. Epimenides was not an inspired prophet, but recognised by Cretans to be a foreteller and a poet. Cretans were known as liars — so much so that a popular saying of that time was ‘to Cretize’, meaning to lie and to cheat. Another proverb was to ‘play the Cretan with a Cretan’, that is, to out-trick a trickster. The description **evil beasts** depict their cruel, wild and ferocious nature. As for **lazy gluttons**, they did not want to work but they sure wanted money and prestige.

If a Cretan (**‘one of them’**) says **Cretans are always liars**, then that statement is self-referentially incoherent, for how can you know if the statement is true when a Cretan says it? But in verse 13, Paul not only affirms that **‘this testimony is true’** of the false teachers, but he also adds that Titus must rebuke them sharply, like using a surgeon’s knife and making decisive cuts with the truth. The positive reason for such a sharp rebuke is so **that they may be sound in the faith**. Despite the severe saying in verse 12, God still wants false teachers to turn to Him. After all, wasn’t Paul a false teacher before he became a believer in Christ? A negative reason given for the sharp rebuke is so that they would not give heed **to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth**. These Jewish fables were fictitious inventions and one need not speculate what these speculations were.

The phrase **the commandments of men** is found in Matthew 15:1-20. Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees (who were of course Jews) who were worshipping God in vain because they taught as doctrines **the commandments of men**. Moreover, Jesus said that **‘whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated. But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man’** (Matthew 15:17b-18). What is pure and what is defiled comes from the heart, from within. But the false teachers in Crete (**especially those of the circumcision**) had lost the ability to discern between what is innocent (**all things are pure**) and what is sinful; they were turning neutral or a-moral things (neither immoral nor moral) into various prescribed rituals (cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-5). **To the pure all things are pure** but the very opposite also applies: if impurity is attributed to non-moral things, then what could it say of the inner state of those who hold this? These actions would defile their minds and

consciences. While these false teachers **profess to know God**, in practise their **works deny Him** and they are denounced for **being abominable** (detestable, even idolatrous), **disobedient** (not in line with God's Word; disobedient to the truth), **and disqualified** (useless) **for every good work**.

D) Speak sound doctrine to various groups 2:1-10

2 ¹But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: ²that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; ³the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things — ⁴that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. ⁶Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, ⁷in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, ⁸sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. ⁹Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, ¹⁰not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

In sharp contrast ('but') to the insubordinates who subvert households and whose teaching — or rather, fables and commandments of men — will produce bad fruit (1:10-11, 14), Titus (**as for you**) is to speak things which are **proper for sound doctrine**. The focus is on ethical conduct, on right living. Who is Titus to teach? The apostle Paul instructs Titus to teach what was appropriate for older men (2:2), older women and (indirectly) younger women (2:3-5), young men (2:6) as well as slaves (2:9-10). This teaching is not only the antidote against error, but also strengthens the inner life of believers (cf. Constable 2016:17).

The old men of a congregation play an important part in the life of a local church. The extent of their influence depends on their example, on the sweetness and mellowness of their Christian character (Hiebert 1957:48). Older men are to be **sober** (not using wine immoderately), **reverent** (honourable character in thought, word and deed), **temperate** (of well-balanced and sound mind) as well as **sound in faith, in love, in patience** (to be well or healthy in respect of faith and love as well as patiently enduring during trials and tribulations). If we are going to 'harden' in our ways in old age, rather harden in faith, love and patience (Guzik 2006). Notice that Paul's instructions honours those who are mature in Christ, those who have become skilled in applying the truth of God's Word in their lives (cf. Heb 5:13-14).

Older women must likewise show Christian character traits. They are to be **reverent in behaviour** (as is befitting or becoming holy persons, those set apart for God), **not slanderers**

(not accusing falsely, not doing the devil’s work by speaking evil or making accusations of others) and **not given to much wine** (not enslaved to it; cf. 1 Tim 3:11). Viewed positively, older women are to be **teachers of good things** (that which is noble or good) — and this teaching would include encouraging or training **younger women**. Older women are to teach the younger women seven things. They are to earnestly **love their husbands** and to **love their children**. While some aspects of this love come naturally, what is to be taught is the self-sacrificing love of Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour (Guzik 2006). In relation to themselves, younger women are to be **discreet** (sound or balanced in attitude, mind and action) and **chaste** (pure and modest). In relation to their homes, they are to be **homemakers** (busy caring for the house and household affairs, but not necessarily exclusively occupied with household chores), **good** (of good constitution or nature, upright, discern between what is good and what is evil) and **obedient to their own husbands**. The reason why the older women are to teach the younger women all these things is so **that the word of God may not be blasphemed**. According to Hiebert (1957:51), the ‘elevating and refining impact of Christianity upon womanhood is one of the significant social contributions of Christianity’.⁹

Constable (2016:20) notes that God wants wives to make the home ‘her *primary* ministry, not necessarily her *sole* ministry’ — before adding this table from a Family Life Conference to contrast the world’s view with God’s view concerning women and their homes:

The world's view	God's view
Home is a boring drudgery.	Home is a haven to come to from the world.
Homemaking & children are a burden.	They are God's good gifts.
Value material success/self-gratification now.	Value character & godliness; invest in the future.
Place children in childcare rather than caring for them yourself.	Parents should teach and fulfil their responsibilities to train their children.
Children, homemaking, and often marriage get in the way of self-achievement.	Raising godly children is one of the ways to fulfil God's purposes & one of the highest callings in life.
Demand your rights to fulfilment.	Give up your rights.

Titus must exhort young men with one command only, namely to be **sober-minded** (2:6; cf. 1:8; 2:2, 4, 8). Young men are to cultivate self-control and balance as opposed to being impetuous and following various passions indiscriminately. Also, Titus was to be an example in two ways. First, his conduct should be a **pattern of good works**. Second, his doctrine (or teaching) is to show **integrity** (incorruptible; attitude when teaching), **reverence** (gravity, dignity, honesty; manner of teaching) and sincerity. His teaching should be spiritually

⁹ It is revealing to see how various ‘religions’ treat women.

healthy; no one should be able to condemn Titus' speech or have anything evil to say about 'us' (including therefore Paul also) — and if they do, they will become ashamed.

Whereas the former groups were based on age or gender, Titus must also address a social class of that time, namely slaves. 'In the ancient world, Christians shocked the larger culture by mixing slaves and masters in the social setting of the church service. This meant that a slave might go to church and be an elder over his own master' (Guzik 2006). Titus is to encourage slaves (**exhort bondservants**) to **be obedient to their own masters** — and by obeying their masters, they would be obeying God (but see Acts 5:2, where relevant). Such submissiveness was not to be in bitterness, but rather to be **well-pleasing** (acceptable) in all things, **not answering back** (gainsay or contradict) and **not pilfering** (stealing or embezzling). Moreover, slaves are to be trustworthy (show **fidelity**) in every matter entrusted to them. A spiritual motive is given for these injunctions: that they **may adorn** (ornament, embellish with honour) **the doctrine of God our Savior in all things**. Slaves have a tremendous opportunity regarding the doctrine of God our Saviour: 'Even one in a low or disadvantaged station in life has the potential to beautify God's truth by the way they live' (Guzik 2006).

X) The grace of God has appeared 2:11-14

¹¹For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, ¹²teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, ¹³looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

In the Greek, the sentence begins with the word 'appeared' (*epiphainō*), thus emphasising the **appearance of the grace of God**. This appearance refers to the first coming of Jesus Christ and the gospel of Christ's death, burial and resurrection which brings **salvation to all men** (cf. 1:3). By God's grace, salvation is available to **all** human beings (cf. Jn 12:32; 1 Jn 2:2), but not all people appropriate this gift of salvation by faith.

As intimated in the introduction (1:1), and for those who have appropriated God's gracious gift of salvation by faith, this grace of God takes us like children back to school, **teaching us** (trains, chastises, restrains, disciplines) two things. First, and viewed negatively, believers ('us') are taught to **deny ungodliness** (that which is unlike God, unlike Jesus Christ) and **worldly lusts** (cf. Rom 12:1-2; 1 Jn 2:16-17). Second, and viewed positively, we should live **soberly** (self-controlled, prudently; cf. 1:8; 2:2, 4-6), **righteously** (justly, fairly) **and godly** (reverent devotion to God) **in this present age**. Wiersbe (2007:793) states it well: To be sober is to emphasise 'the believer's relationship to himself, while "righteously" deals with his

relationships with other people. “Godly” speaks of the Christian’s relationship to the Lord, though the qualities should not be separated’.

The above is to continue **in this present age**, an age where we do not yet see all things submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 2:8), an age described elsewhere in Scripture as evil because Satan is still deceiving all the nations (cf. Gal 1:4; cf. Rev 20:3). While living lives as described above (i.e. **soberly, righteously, and godly**), believers are to look **for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**. Believers are to live with the constant attitude and expectation that our **blessed hope, our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ**, may appear at any moment. Our **blessed hope** is settled in Him and the grace of God disciplines us to live lives that honour Him. The next **appearing** of Jesus Christ will be at the rapture, and such appearing of the Lord will be **glorious**.

At Christ’s first coming, He **gave Himself for us** on the cross, dying a substitutionary death for the penalty of our sins (cf. Mat 20:28). The redemption that Christ bought does two things for us. Our great God and Saviour not only redeemed us **from every lawless deed**, thereby justifying us, but He is also sanctifying us, to **purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works**.¹⁰

D’) Speak and exhort sound doctrine 2:15-3:3

¹⁵Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you. ³Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, ²to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. ³For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

Paul addresses Titus directly, instructing him again to **speak these things**, the doctrine of God referred to earlier in this letter, including the gospel of Christ (cf. 2:1-14). But it may well also anticipate what Paul instructs Titus to do next. Titus must **exhort** the people so that they will apply what they have been taught and to **rebuke** (*periphronēō*) **with all authority**. Titus is not to let anyone **despise** him by getting around the doctrine of God through clever rationalisations to continue in their old ways (cf. 1:12). This doctrine is from God who has **all authority** (cf. 1:3).

¹⁰ The Church comprises of Jewish and non-Jewish believers in one body of Christ. After He has appeared in the air at the time of the rapture, the Lord will continue to redeem and purify for Himself more believers, but during the Tribulation, God’s plan on earth will continue not through the raptured Church, but will refocus on Israel and all the nations.

In Titus 3:1-3, Paul focuses on Christians' behaviour in relation to rulers of government and to the rest of society. Titus is told to continue to **remind them** (Cretan believers and, by extension, all Christians) to be model citizens who do at least these six things: (1) **obey rulers and authorities** (cf. 1:12; Rom 13:1-7), are (2) **ready for every good work** (but unready for any bad work), (3) **speak evil of no one** (no maligning or slandering), (4) be **peaceable** (not a fighter, unaggressive, not pugnacious) (5) **gentle** (considerate, forbearing, uncontentious) (6) **showing all humility to all men** (a sweet reasonableness to all people).

Christians can only boast in the Lord Jesus Christ who has appeared to all men. Paul reminds the Cretan believers — and Paul includes himself in this characterisation (**we ourselves were also once...**) of the way they used to be before they became Christians. 'Such a presentation of a person's past before becoming a Christian, followed by a description of his condition as a Christian, played a common role in early Christian preaching' (Lopez 2011:315-316).¹¹

Constable (2016:27) notes the following concerning the content of Titus 3:3:

[E]very characteristic that he [Paul] mentioned in this verse contrasts with one he had urged his readers to adopt earlier in this epistle. They—Paul included himself—had been: "foolish," not *sensible*; "disobedient," not *submissive*; "deceived," not *enlightened*; and "enslaved," not *free and self-disciplined*. Moreover, they had been "malicious," not *peaceable*; "envious," not *considerate*; and "hateful," not *loving*.

But how did Paul, Titus, Cretan believers — yes, all Christians — change from what they were to what they are now becoming?

X') The kindness and love of God have appeared 3:4-7

⁴But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Christians cannot save themselves (**not by works of righteousness which we have done**). Every human being needs a kinsman who is willing and able to pay the price for our sins. The **appearance** referred to is that of Jesus Christ at his first coming. Since His incarnation, God the Son took on human nature in addition to His pre-existing divine nature. This appearance of Jesus Christ is the greatest manifestation of God the Father's **kindness and love towards man** (cf. Jn 3:16).

¹¹ See for example other 'vice lists' noted in Romans 1:29-32; 2:8; 13:13; 1 Corinthians 5:10-11; 2 Corinthians 12:20-21, Ephesians 4:31, Philippians 3:2; Colossians 3:5-9 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10; 6:4-5.

God in His mercy saved us, not by our works, lest anyone should boast, but through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He [God the Father] poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior. All three Persons of the Trinity are involved in the salvation of every believer. The washing of regeneration could refer to the spiritual cleansing and regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (Guzik 2006). According to Hiebert (1957:70),

The cleansing is effected through the application of the Word of God to heart and conscience. The Word is elsewhere pointed out as the instrument or means of regeneration (1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18). As the revelation of the Word is applied to the heart, regeneration is wrought by the Spirit. It is the initial experience of salvation wrought within the believer. Baptism is the consequent testimony of the washing that has taken place.

The renewing of the Holy Spirit begins when a person becomes a believer in Christ and is a continuing work by the Holy Spirit in the life of such believer, leading him or her on to further sanctification (cf. 3:7). God has not only justified us (declared us righteous), but by His grace we have also become heirs according to the hope of eternal life (3:7; cf. 1:2). Constable (2016:28) summarises it as follows: 'In verses 5-7, Paul explained *what* God did (saved, washing, regeneration, renewing, justified), its *basis* (God's mercy), its *means* (the Holy Spirit), and its *goal* (hope of eternal life).'

On the birthday of the Church, on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out not only on the twelve apostles, but on other Jewish believers too as they were baptised into the Body of Christ (Acts 2). The Holy Spirit was also poured out on Samaritan (Acts 8) and Gentile believers (Acts 10-11; 11:15-17) as the gospel of Christ spread from Jerusalem, to Judea, Samaria and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).¹²

DD') Affirm sound doctrine and good works 3:8

⁸This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.

For the third time in this letter, Paul instructs Titus to affirm 'these things' (3:4-7; cf. also 2:1, 15) and to do so **constantly**. The aim is to exhort believers, **those who have believed in God**, to act on the **faithful saying**, to not just be hearers of the doctrine of God, but also to be doers of it, being **careful to maintain good works**. **Good** works are not only essentially excellent, but are also **profitable** or beneficial on a practical level (Constable 2016:28). 'The best way a local

¹² The Holy Spirit will be poured out on the remnant of Israel in the Tribulation Period (Joel 2:28-29).

church has to witness to the lost is through the sacrificial service of its members' (Wiersbe 2007:794).

C') Reject false teachers and their teachings of 3:9-11

⁹But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. ¹⁰Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, ¹¹knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.

In contrast to the good works mentioned in verse 8 ('but'), Titus is also to continuously avoid what is **unprofitable and useless**. The false teachers were promoting **foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law** (cf. also 1:10-16). These disputes, about predominantly Judaic issues, produce division. Titus is to admonish these people twice. The idea is restoration, but if this fails, and they do not cease their teaching, then Titus is to reject these false teachers (cf. Mat 18:15-17), **knowing that such a person is warped** (twisted, the heart turned the wrong way) **and sinning, being self-condemned**.

B') Instructions regarding other workers, good works 3:12-14

¹²When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. ¹³Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing. ¹⁴And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

Paul gave Titus certain instructions earlier in the letter (1:5-9), but now more instructions follow. Paul had decided to **spend the winter in Nicopolis** ('city of victory') but, once **Artemis** or **Tychicus** had arrived in Crete, Titus was to **be diligent to come to** Paul. This again shows that Titus acted as the representative of the apostle Paul and that Titus' position on Crete was not permanent (Hiebert 1957:77). We do not have information about Artemas, but we know that Tychicus was from the province of Asia, the bearer of Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, a beloved brother, faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord (Acts 20:4; Eph 6:21; Col 4:7).

Before Titus is to leave for Nicopolis, Titus must send **Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing**. The name Zenas means 'gift of Zeus' and it appears he was either an expert in the Law of Moses or in Roman or Greek law. Apollos was a Jew born in Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures (Acts 18:24-28). Titus and the Cretan Christians were given an opportunity to do good works by assisting Zenas and Apollos so that they **may lack nothing**. Not only Zenas and Apollos should be helped, but Paul again instructs believers **to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs**, so that believers are **not unfruitful**. This would be in stark contrast to other Cretans (cf. 1:12).

A') Benediction 3:15

¹⁵All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

Paul as well as his fellow workers in Nicopolis greeted Titus. But Paul also sent greetings to those who love us in the faith. It is the same faith mentioned in the first verse of this letter. This greeting of Paul to 'those who love us' may well show that the letter to Titus was to be read publicly in the local churches in Crete. The final greeting — grace be with you all — includes all Cretan Christians to whom Titus will convey the contents of this letter. This letter to Titus started with the free, unmerited favour of God (1:4), was mentioned in key passages of this letter (2:11; 3:7) and now, fittingly, also ends with grace (3:15).

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