

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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PAUL'S LETTER TO TITUS ABOUT MATURITY

Titus 1

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I am going to cover three points today:

- Paul insisted that church leaders be mature.
- Paul instructed the church not to put up with troublemakers.
- Paul believed Christians could overcome their culture.

SCRIPTURE: Titus 1:1-4

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—² in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,³ and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,⁴ To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

EXPLANATION: Paul starts his book in typical fashion, with a greeting that included his authority as a man called of God and a good word for everyone.

What we know about Titus

- We know from other scriptures that Titus was a Gentile. (Gal 2:3)
- We believe that Titus was saved as a result of Paul's preaching because Paul called him a "true son." (1:4)
- We know that Titus was a helper of Paul. (II Corinthians 8:23)

Titus went with Paul to Jerusalem. Paul was his mentor and told him some of the Jewish Christians were holding on to traditions that no longer mattered, and Paul told Titus that he didn't have to follow those traditions.

We know that Titus was the mail carrier for Paul on at least one occasion. Can you imagine writing a letter and having to hire an individual to take it?

Titus was the mailman for a letter addressed to the church at Corinth. The letter rebuked the church for putting up with things they shouldn't have put up with. We don't know for sure if this letter was referencing things mentioned in I Corinthians or another letter that didn't get published in the Bible, but we do know that II Corinthians gives us a clue that Titus stayed with the church for a while after he delivered the letter.

Titus also helped with an offering for the poor that was noteworthy enough to be mentioned in II Corinthians 8.

Paul was in and out of jail for preaching the Gospel, and one time when he got out of jail, he got Titus to go with him to the island of Crete. They started a work there and Paul did not have time to finish it, so he left Titus to finish it. Now, what I want to point out here is that Titus had come full circle. He was once a new believer, he matured as he lived with the church at Corinth and as he traveled with Paul. Now, Paul trusted Titus enough to carry on the work without him. You've heard me talk about the importance of Christian growth many times. Someone might stand up and say "time-out," we've heard that before! I've read that people need to hear something seven times before they really hear it.

Now here we have Titus discipling a church, and Paul wrote instructions to him.

MATURITY WAS EXPECTED FROM CHURCH LEADERS

SCRIPTURE: Titus 1:5-9

The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. ⁶ An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. ⁷ Since an overseer manages God's household, 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. ⁹ He 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.

EXPLANATION: Paul left Titus in Crete for a reason, the Bible says. This echoes a truth for all Christians. God has a mission for each person. I believe each and every Christian has a specific purpose. I do not believe that any Christian's purpose is to just be a passive observer in the crowd. Having said that, there is a lot of pressure in churches today to find your gift and...*get busy!* I want to relieve you of that pressure. Pray to know God's will, look for opportunities to serve, and you'll find your place.

Now in our church, we don't have elders or bishops but we have people who fill similar roles.

I think we've all heard lots of teaching on the qualifications of church leaders, so I won't spend much time on that other than to say it's clear that leaders of the church should not be immature believers. They must be sensible people, and they must be knowledgeable about the scriptures so they can teach and refute false doctrine.

It's a mistake to take immature believers and put them in positions of authority. The same with irregular attenders. It's not wise to give people a job in order to get them more committed. It usually just doesn't work out that way.

Not only did Paul teach about the requirements of church leaders...

PAUL INSTRUCTED THE CHURCH NOT TO PUT UP WITH TROUBLEMAKERS

SCRIPTURE: Titus 1:10-11

For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group. ¹¹ They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain.

So...

1. Their words had no value.
2. They did not lead people to good living.
3. They told false stories.
4. They disrupted families.
5. They had selfish motives.

We can take those five identifiers and turn them into questions.

Do a leader's words have value? Do their words lead people to good living? Are they making up things that are not true? Do they disrupt family life? Do they have selfish motives? I am telling you this is so simple, but so profound.

1. More than once I've asked people, "Where are we going with this discussion?" Words should have value.

2. Words either build up or tear down. Do our words lead people to good living?

3. False stories: In his letter I Timothy 1:4, Paul wrote, "*Do not pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.*"

We conclude from several scriptures that people declared themselves experts about spiritual things. They debated and confused people and generally just wasted time. Fake news has been around a long time. Stay away from those whose words just cause speculation.

4. Notice one of the qualities listed of a church leader was keeping one's children under control. Now those who taught falsehoods caused family disruption. Again, I've said several times, Satan's goal is for everything to work backwards.

5. As I've learned, and continue to learn, there are two types of people: givers and takers. Altruism is the unselfish concern for others. When he was president, the elder George Bush said America needs more altruists. Be wise and don't be pulled into a selfish person's motives.

In the case in Titus, the selfish motive involved money. Some way or other, they wanted to make money with their false teaching. I have trouble envisioning this, but I guess they passed an offering after they told a lie or had some type of financial scheme attached to their lies. Do not give to any ministry that you are not confident about!

SCRIPTURE: Titus 1:12-16

One of Crete's own prophets has said it: "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons. ¹³ This saying is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith ¹⁴ and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth. ¹⁵ To 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. ¹⁶ *They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.*

EXPLANATION: There was a famous Cretean named Epimenides. He was a false teacher and poet who lived about 600 years before Jesus was born. Here's what he said about fellow Cretes:

- They were liars. When a person lied there was a common phrase in this day “to speak like a person in Crete”.
- Epimenides said people from Crete were as cruel as wild animals.
- He also said they were lazy and ate and drank too much.

Can you imagine an entire ancient culture known for both telling lies and believing lies? It seems to me that if a culture was known for telling lies, then people within that people group would be on guard for lies and wouldn't believe everything they were told. But nevertheless, Paul agreed with the stereotype, and he said to *“rebuke them sharply, so they will be sound in the faith.”*

Then, Paul tells Titus what to do with troublemakers:

PAUL BELIEVED CHRISTIANS COULD OVERCOME THEIR CULTURE

EXPLANATION: These people were from a culture of rambling about nothing important, lying and telling myths, focusing on things that diverted the work of the church. Paul blew the whistle and told Titus to expose it. He knew that these islanders were prone to these things. Why did he say to rebuke sharply, *“so they will be sound in the faith”*?

Paul believed they could be brought around to both telling the truth and believing the truth. This goes in line with Paul's experiences in the book of Acts where the cultures came together to form a Christian culture. Paul knew it could happen on Crete as well. He knew that someday people from Crete would be known not as lying Creteans, but as Christians. Those people could say, “I went from not knowing any better to knowing better.”

ILLUSTRATION: Mark Zook was a missionary with New Tribes Mission. He went to a faraway place in New Guinea and reached out to a tribe that had a religious system built on deception. A few people created a ritual where they wore masks and the people believed they were spirits of the dead that had returned.

Occasionally, they recruited a new person and told the person that it was made up. Then the recruit joined them by wearing a mask.

When Mark led the tribe to faith in Jesus, all of that was exposed and they quit doing it. You see, before they didn't know any better. Now they did.

CONCLUSION: When people come together through Jesus, a Christian culture emerges. This was Paul's hope for the people of Crete. What happened to that church? Historical writings tell us the church saw steady growth for 800 years.

What is the word to us today? What truths can we learn from this?

1. We must not put anyone in a leadership role until they are ready for it.
2. We must not put up with trouble-makers.
4. We must overcome our own hang-ups that interfere with the Christian culture.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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