

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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THE DESIRE OF TITUS FOR THE CHURCH TO SURVIVE

Titus 1

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Here are the four points we will be covering today:

- Church leaders must have church survival as their goal.
- Peddlers of deception must be silenced.
- False teaching must be rebuked.
- Christians should be good Bible fact-checkers.

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 mailman for Paul on at least one occasion. Can you imagine writing a letter and having to hire an individual to deliver 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 what would become 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.

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

Paul spent time in jail in Rome, and when he was released he got Titus to go with him to the island of Crete. They started work there and Paul did not have time to finish, so he left Titus to complete it. Now, what I want to point out to you 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.

Now, Titus is discipling a church and Paul wrote instructions to him.

CHURCH LEADERS MUST HAVE CHURCH SURVIVAL AS THE GOAL

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 person in the crowd.

APPLICATION: Now in our Baptist world, only a few churches have elders and none I am aware of have bishops, but we have people in the church and in our denomination who fill similar roles.

I think we've all had 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 are not to be immature believers. They must be sensible people, and they must be knowledgeable about the scriptures so they can teach and refute false doctrine.

Let's remember the reason any organization wants qualified people in leadership is for the survival of the organization. Every organization has its vulnerabilities. If they are compromised, then the organization will be damaged or even fail altogether.

- The vulnerability might be its very product: For example: The backbone of a bank is money. If the money supply is threatened in any way, the bank will suffer.
- The backbone of a grocery is food. If the supply chain is threatened in any way, the store will suffer.
- The backbone of the auto industry is manufacturing – and so on with every industry.
- *All the leaders of these organizations must be knowledgeable.*
- The backbone of the church is truth. If truth is compromised, then the church might survive, but it will go in the opposite direction of what it was created to accomplish. Truth must be guarded. This is why leaders must be grounded in the church's main commodity - truth.

PEDDLERS OF DECEPTION MUST BE SILENCED

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.

APPLICATION: I want us to think about this today—if someone in the church rambles on, here’s the test, coming straight out of Titus.

- Do their words have value?
- Do their words deceive?
- Are they affiliated with groups known to deceive?
- Do they disrupt households, or in the larger view, do they disrupt groups of people who are closely associated?
- Do they seek to gain from their reckless speech? This might be the most difficult thing to discern. A person might just want to appear as an authority on a subject when he or she really is not. A person might have a desire to be the hub of information. It’s important to not be drawn into their schemes.

For those of you who are not retired, those of you still working, you probably know people who are guilty of all the above. Make sure you are not that person. Disassociate yourself from such people.

1. Words of value: more than once I’ve asked people, “Where are we going with this discussion?”

2. Leading people to good living: Words either build up or tear down.

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 apparently some people made up stories about people in the Bible and debated things that just wasted time. You know what? Stay away from those whose words just cause speculation.

4. Family disruption. 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. Selfish motives. A selfish person has a hard time having an unselfish concern for others. Be wise and don't be pulled into a selfish person's selfish motives.

In Crete, 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. The best thing to do with selfish people is to not give to them and fuel their fire. In other words, don't give them the time of day.

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 Cretan 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 Cretans:

1. They were liars. There was a common phrase in this day, "to speak like a person in Crete".
2. Epimenides said people from Crete were as cruel as wild animals.
3. He also said they were lazy and ate and drank too much.

Making such statements about any nationality would get one in a lot of trouble, but Titus was smart by quoting one of their own.

FALSE TEACHING MUST BE REBUKED

Interestingly enough, Paul agreed with Epimenides in verse 13. *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.*

It's interesting that an entire people group was 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 sharply, so they will be sound in the faith."*

ILLUSTRATION: I first studied the book of Titus in detail six years ago. Since that time, I believe we as Americans have become complete suckers for lies. I have encouraged you many times to be on guard for soundbites and video clips that are taken out of context. I tell you, the end of America will not be a terrible president; it won't be an economic collapse. The end of America will be a nation of people believing and forwarding fake news!

APPLICATION: On the church level – our truth is right here in the scripture. I like the fact that it's not continuing to expand. A lifetime of growth is right here. As believers, when we are hit with a barrage of media images and words and don't know who or what to believe, let us cycle back around to what we know to be true. I believe if we study the truths of scripture, we'll be more sensitive to discern false narratives in society.

Now let me review:

- I told you about Titus.
 - I gave you the requirements of church leaders.
 - I told you how troublemakers were identified.
 - I told you what Paul said to do with troublemakers.
- Now, last, and this is the best....

CHRISTIANS MUST BE GOOD BIBLE FACT-CHECKERS

EXPLANATION: As the people brought this 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 Cretans, 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 new 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. Before they didn't know any better, now they did.

CONCLUSION: You see, when the 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 troublemakers.
3. We must rebuke troublemakers with the goal of bringing them to the truth.
4. We must overcome our own hang-ups that interfere with the Christian culture.