

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
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THE CRETANS AS CHRIST'S NEW CREATIONS

Titus 2

September 6, 2020

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Here are my three points for today:

- Paul challenged the older Cretans to set the example.
- The Gospel message radically changed everything for the Cretans.
- The letter to the Cretans is relevant for our times.

**INTRODUCTION:** I have already given you some history about the people of the island of Crete. They were known as a people group caught up in lies. They told lies and believed lies. When I first studied this book in depth four years ago, I couldn't imagine a culture known for telling lies and believing lies, but in the last four years, I've seen our country go down that path.

Titus was a young man under the tutelage of the Apostle Paul. He and Paul went to Crete to spread the message of Christ, and Paul left Titus there to continue the work.

We know from other scriptures that Titus was a Gentile. This means he did not have a Jewish upbringing and would not have known what we call the Old Testament as well as Jews who had become Christians.

Titus learned that many Jews were trying to require belief in their old traditions along with their new Christian beliefs. I've spent a lot of time teaching you about that during my time as pastor, and everyone should have at least a general idea of what I am talking about. Paul told Titus those old traditions no longer mattered, and he didn't have to follow them.

Titus was also noted for helping out with an offering for the poor, something that was probably rather new and unique in his day. All these things built character and

leadership skills in Titus, and Paul was confident that Titus could carry on the work without him.

Last week, we looked at church survival as a strategy for Titus. This involved silencing false teachers and exposing false teaching.

We know the chapter numbers and verses were added after these letters were written in order to make it easier to read and study, so at times, like here, we have a verse that might have been better left in the previous chapter. Paul tells Titus in chapter 2, verse 1:

**SCRIPTURE:** Titus 2:1

*You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine.*

In chapter two we have a call for order, first to the older men and older women, then to the younger people. The older people are addressed first.

## **PAUL CHALLENGED THE OLDER CRETANS TO SET THE EXAMPLE**

**SCRIPTURE:** Titus 2:2-3

*Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.*

**EXPLANATION:** This sounds rather unremarkable, like something any of us might write. But in a culture known for telling lies and believing lies, this was rather revolutionary.

In this culture, change was to start with the older people. They were to model to the younger people how they should live. In other cultures, I am sure this message goes over well. An older person with gray hair in other cultures is one to be respected, one to listen to, one to learn from. If there is anything that really needs to change in America, this is it. I am sure you agree. The wisdom of the elderly gives way to youthful ignorance many times.

In Crete, since lies were the norm, Paul was telling Titus to challenge the people to a higher ethic, a better standard of living.

You must consider how revolutionary this was! They were being called to change what they had known to be the norm. A completely different and new way of thinking and living. Instead of being great liars and modeling to young people how to be great liars, now they were to be respectable, and the women were to be reverent.

As we know from history, the Christian message took off on the island of Crete. I wonder if it actually saved the culture from complete annihilation.

Paul's letter goes on:

**SCRIPTURE:** Titus 2:4-6

*Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, <sup>5</sup> to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.*

*<sup>6</sup> Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled.*

If you haven't noticed it, I am going to be Captain Obvious here: The older adults had to get their act together first.

Not only did Paul challenge the older Cretans to set the example, but Paul outlines a whole new way of life for the Cretans.

## **THE GOSPEL RADICALLY CHANGED EVERYTHING FOR THE CRETANS**

**SCRIPTURE:** Titus 2:7-10

*In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness <sup>8</sup> and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.*

<sup>9</sup> *Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, <sup>10</sup> and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.*

**EXPLANATION:** We know from study that the word “slave” here can also mean “servant”. Of course, our background about slavery is American slavery. Verses 9 and 10 are not a justification for slavery. Paul was addressing the culture as it was.

I said all of that in order to focus on the Gospel call. The earlier verses are all a build-up to the next verses -- getting the order of things right by silencing false teachers, by flushing away their false teaching, by the adults setting an example to the younger folks. Why all this? So the Gospel will be heard loud and clear:

**SCRIPTURE:** Titus 2:11-15

*For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. <sup>12</sup> It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, <sup>13</sup> while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, <sup>14</sup> who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

*<sup>15</sup> These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.*

**EXPLANATION:** Why didn’t Paul start his letter to Titus with these verses? Because the message would be lost if the other things hadn’t been taken care of first. There isn’t much hope for the Gospel if those telling the message aren’t a people of order and virtue. There isn’t much hope for the Gospel if those telling the message have no hope. In other words, without order and without virtue, the Gospel message would have sounded like nothing more than another lie to the Cretans.

Salvation offered to all people? Who would believe that in a culture saturated with lies?

Saying no to worldly passions and having self-control? Why would one do that if there was no reason to, if no one set the example.

Living godly lives in this present age? What was this “present age”? It was the age of telling lies and believing lies. It was the age of every person for himself or herself. I’ve taught you the three things you can do with culture: be enthralled by it, withdraw from it, and engage it. The Christians in Crete were being challenged to engage the culture.

Let’s review:

Paul challenged the older Cretans to set the example.

The Gospel message radically changed everything for the Cretans.

## **THE LETTER TO THE CRETANS IS RELEVANT FOR OUR TIMES**

**APPLICATION:** In my preaching, I don’t bring up a lot of current events directly. My goal is to preach in such a way that gives input into your understanding of current events. Reading the headlines and then creating a sermon around it seems rather shallow to me. And it would be a little too easy. Some things I choose to do the hard way, like studying and preaching. Taking the easy way out would be shortchanging you. It doesn’t take a genius to see how the Scripture is relevant for today.

Today, however, I want us to look at verses 11 through 15 as if they were written directly to us. We do believe all scripture is written to us in a sense. What we really mean is that we know the letter to Titus was directly written to Titus for the believers on the island of Crete, and that as modern-day believers, we can glean from this letter what truth God has for us today.

But I want to be more literal than usual, OK? Let’s look at verses 11-15 as if this letter were just written, along with some commentary for me.

Dear Members of Tusculum Hills Baptist Church and The Extended Television Audience:

Verse 11: *For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.* All people means all people. It doesn’t just mean a select few. Yes, salvation is offered to the person you hate, the person who doesn’t look like you, the person who seems

completely unredeemable.

Verse 12: *It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.* This present age is one that is full of uncertainty, one that is filled with perversion, riots, and looting, one that’s filled with mayors and governors in our nation who are derelict in their duties to protect their citizens. This present age is full of threats to our security, threats to our democracy, threats to our way of life as we know it. Threats to truth since lies seem to prevail today. All these things make us wonder if God is awake. But we must say “no” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this PRESENT AGE.

Verse 13: *while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.* He is returning someday, so don’t grow weary in waiting and hoping. It’s a sure thing that he will return.

Verse 14: *who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

As a believer in Jesus Christ, he is calling us to a better life, not because we are better than others, but because he has redeemed us with *his* life. And if we live worthy lives then people are more likely to listen to what we have to say.

Verse 15: *These, then* - Teachers, and church members who are doing your best to reach your own families and friends with the Gospel of Jesus - *These, then are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke properly* -- properly here means to convince with solid, compelling evidence, especially to expose *with all authority.* *Do not let anyone despise you.* If people despise you for your beliefs, don’t let it get to you. Be patient, kind, and loving.

If I wrote that letter to you, I’d sign it, Sincerely, Paul, but not the Apostle Paul.

Do you see the relevance of these verses today? The historical background of it all is certainly interesting no doubt, but the reality is, if we had never read any of the scripture at all and we opened it up to these verses, it would read as if it were written for us in *this* present age.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

Find me at [www.thbc.com](http://www.thbc.com). Click on sermons or YouTube channel: Pastor Paul Gunn  
Thanks to Jennifer Anderson for her editing assistance.

Sincerely, Paul Gunn  
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