

Lesson Seven

PRACTICE CHRISTIANITY IN THE CHURCH!

Titus 1:1-16

PAUL'S GREETING

SECTION ONE 1:1-4

1 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 which accords with godliness, **2** in hope of eternal life which God, who never lies, promised ages ago **3** and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by command of God our Savior;

4 To Titus, my true child in a common faith:

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

V. 1 As customary, Paul mentions how he appeared to himself, **slave of God**, and how he functions in regards to others, **apostle of Christ**. He also notes the purpose of his calling, not to lord it over God's people but to increase the faith of **God's elect** or chosen people (Psa. 88:3; Isa. 43:20).

V. 2 In contrast to these Cretans who had a reputation for lying (1:12), God always speaks truth for He is truth. Titus after working with people whose word was not to be trusted found great assurance in this reminder

that God doesn't "double deal" nor speak half-truths.

V. 3 The apostle specifically ties God's trustworthiness to the promise of eternal life. God foresaw man's fall into sin, and planned even before creation how He could redeem fallen humanity (Eph. 1:4; II, 1:9). God makes His will known through the preaching of His Gospel, a foolish message to the lost but God's revelation of a mystery to the saved (I Cor. 1:18-31). God has His own timetable (Gal. 4:4), and we are foolish to speculate when and how He will accomplish it (cf. comments on I, 6:15).

V. 4 Paul baptized Titus and/or taught him thus making him Paul's **true child** (lit., "Genuine son," the same as I, 1:2 and II, 1:2). When we have God for a Father, we gain a multitude of brothers and sisters and some who are so close to us that they become fathers and mothers (Rom. 16:13).

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Is it true that the greater a man's position or knowledge, the greater his obligation is to serve others?
2. Has God ever lied? Do some think so? Why?
3. Is it possible to be more intimate with our spiritual family than with our physical one? Should this be so?

THE MISSION — APPOINT ELDERS

SECTION TWO 1:5-9

5 This is why I left you in Crete, that you might amend what was defective, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you, 6 if any man is blameless, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of being profligate or insubordinate. 7 For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, 8 but hospitable, a lover of goodness, master of himself, upright, holy, and self-controlled; 9 he must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it.

V. 5 Trying to incorporate this verse into the Acts 27 account is difficult as there is no mention of Titus even being along. Probably this

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was done by Paul during the inter-prison travels. **Mend** is a word sometimes applied to the setting of broken limbs or the straightening of crooked ones. **Defective** means "things that are lacking" suggesting an incompleteness in the church. Paul specifically mentions the lack of elders. Titus' functions throughout this epistle should be read in the light of this defectiveness in the church. Titus is to develop the church, not rule over it (Eph. 4:11, 12). His work will soon be finished if he does it well (3:12).

Can a church exist without elders? Yes, but when this is true, the church is in a state of immaturity and should strive to correct this lack. Every church in the N.T. seems to have had elders (cf. comments on I, 3:1ff). Notice that here each town had its own leaders with no indication that a single bishop ruled the entire island.

Deacons are not mentioned. Perhaps that office was not needed on Crete at this time. Notice the similarity of these qualifications to those in I Tim. 3. Some variations exist indicating that Paul had a definite maturity-level in mind for an elder but did not have a legalistic, hand-out sheet he passed to every congregation.

Appoint means *install, ordain, put into office*. It does not mean choose. In Acts 6:3 this same word is used after the apostles had told the *people* to choose "seven men whom we may appoint." If the congregation has no choice, why bother to give qualifications to guide their selection of elders?

Since the qualifications have already been covered in I Tim. 3, we shall make mention only of those which are different.

V. 6 Paul adds **believing** to children in this passage indicating they are to be Christians. Some prefer to interpret this word as meaning "faithful" children, those who are well behaved. However, the N.T. usage of this word almost always refers to the idea of belief in Jesus. **Children** sometimes means one child (Gen. 21:7; I Tim. 5:4, 8).

V. 7 An elder is God's **steward** or trustee as he acts on behalf of God and is accountable to Him. In speaking of money, Paul adds the idea of "base" gain indicating that some might seek the office for the pay it brought (I, 5:17) or misuse money entrusted to his care (Acts 11:29, 30).

V. 8 A **lover of goodness** is absent from the Timothy list. What a man thinks about and longs for shapes his character (Prov. 23:7; Phil. 4:8). He is to be **upright** for fairness and justice must mark his every action (I, 5:21). **Holy** is the word "saint," one "set apart" for God. Every Christian is a saint (Phil. 1:1). **Self-controlled** is literally "in control of strength" and carries the same basic idea as **master of himself**. This concept of self-discipline permeates these epistles.

V. 9 This function amplifies the qualification of apt teacher in I Tim. 3:2. He must be able to **give instruction** to believers and to **confute** or

stop the arguments of perverters. Part of the shepherd's pastoring involves driving away preying wolves (Acts 20:28, 29). Paul does not say an elder must be able to preach, but he must be able to communicate the faith to others. But forceful preaching and teaching should be the goal of every conscientious elder (1, 5:17).

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Is it better to have no elders than to have unqualified ones?
2. How can we keep the selection of elders from being a popularity contest? Suggest practical ways to make these qualifications meaningful at election time.
3. If preaching is the ultimate goal of the elder's teaching ministry, how can we develop this function?

THE PURPOSE — TO STOP FALSE TEACHING

SECTION THREE 1:10-16

10 For there are many insubordinate men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially the circumcision party; 11 they must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for base gain what they have no right to teach. 12 One of themselves, a prophet of their own said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." 13 This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, 14 instead of giving heed to Jewish myths or to commands of men who reject the truth. 15 To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted. 16 They profess to know God, but they deny him by their deeds; they are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good deed.

V. 10 One man can incite a riot. **Many** men twisting truth should alarm us. Paul notes three characteristics of these teachers. (1) **Insubordinate** (lit., "not under rule"), refusing to recognize the authority of God's Word or of God's men, the bishops. (2) **Empty talkers** who fill the air with vain words (Jude 16). (3) **Deceivers** who will pervert truth, even God's Word, to gain their end (1, 1:3). The Jewish group apparently were the ring-leaders on Crete.

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V. 11 The elders must **silence** (lit., “gag” or “muzzle”) them. Perhaps a word of warning would suffice (II, 2:24). If not, a sharper correction should be made (I, 1:3; II, 1:13). If these failed, they should be disbarred from fellowship (I, 1:20).

The book of Acts tells of household conversions; here, Paul speaks of household perversions. Theophylact, an early church writer, calls these perverters, “The devil’s crowbars with which he pulls down the houses of God.” Their motive is the same as that condemned in I Tim. 6:5. Judas sold his Lord for 30 pieces of silver. Some still walk in his shoes.

V. 12 Lest any think Paul too hard on these teachers, he quotes one of their own wise men who would be expected to say something nice about his own people. But Eumenides, a Cretan who lived about 600 B.C. and regarded as a prophet by those people, agrees with Paul’s conclusion (To call him “prophet” is simply recognizing his given title and not affirming he is of God any more than Elijah is referring to the “prophets of Baal” in I Kings 18:40 as though they were of the Lord.) Even long ago these people were liars, brutish, animalistic people, with a dominant concern for bodily appetites. Their lower nature controlled them. In Paul’s day, to call a man a “Cretan” was to brand him a money-hungry liar to whom nothing was sacred. What a people to whom to preach!

V. 13 A strong jerk on the chain can settle the snarling dog; a sharp rebuke is all that settles some people who mistake gentleness for weakness. **Sharply** comes from a word meaning “to cut.” Let us not be afraid to hurt feelings if that is the only way to protect God’s truth. The surgeon often must use his scapel on cancerous tissue if he is to save the rest of the body.

Amazingly, these **evil beasts** are in the church although the church does not seem to be in them. The purpose of rebuke is to correct their faith. Our goal ought always be to help, not just to hurt.

V. 14 These Cretans are following **Jewish myths** whereas the Ephesians are said to be obsessed with myths and idle stories (I, 1:4; 4:7; II, 2:16; 4:4); this suggests a lesser influence by the Jews in that Grecian culture. Anything that leads us away from God’s Word is to be condemned, however interesting it may appear.

V. 15 Paul relates purity to motives. The Jews felt that certain objects were unclean in their own right (Lk. 11:41). But Paul echoes Jesus’ words that it is man who defiles the object, and not the object the man. Doing right things for evil motives corrupts that action (for example, giving alms to receive man’s praise). And sometimes things done with poor judgment are acceptable to our Lord because of a noble motive (Jn. 12:7). Some things are always wrong no matter what the motive (“Love” does not make right adultery.)

V. 16 Profession without performance incurs condemnation (Mk. 11:12-14). Their character is **detestable**, often translated "abominable." In Prov. 17:15, this refers to a perverter of moral distinctions. Their actions are **disobedient** (lit., "unpersuadeable") as they rebel against all authority, even God. Their value or worth is **unfitness**, a word applied to a counterfeit coin, a cowardly soldier who deserts in battle, a stone rejected by careful builders.

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. How do we "silence" those who are destroying the faith?
2. Do we have any "Cretans" in our society?
3. Can you think of times when good actions are corrupted by poor motives?
4. When actions or poor judgment are acceptable to God because of the good motive behind them? How far can we carry this principle?