

Titus 1

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 08 November 2010 14:54

In this chapter Paul instructs Titus, an able and known Christian teacher, to recognise and deal with bad pastors. This was vital, for Paul wanted him to appoint new pastors in every city in Crete.

We have a similar need today, because few pulpits are occupied by genuine, called men. Rather, they are mainly self-appointed, being 'voted-in' by local churches or 'ordained' by their Bible colleges. Let us take back the churches for Christ!

Verses 1-4

1.

Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;

2.

In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

3.

But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour;

4.

To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Paul always states his office, which is subservient and subject to Christ. He is "a servant of God" and "an apostle of Jesus Christ". Many claim these offices but few live by them, in humility and truth, and few are actually called to them anyway.

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He performs his ministry “according to the faith of God’s elect”. The preposition, ‘according to’, denoting movement, means that his guidance constantly comes from God and diffuses downwards to him as a mere created being. The term has a huge number of meanings, depending on context.

In this case it means that Paul’s office and teaching are related to the faith or trust found in all God’s chosen people, the elect, and is consistent with it, or is ‘in the manner of’. In other words, his ministry is a shared attribute, in common with the faith of people predestinated to salvation. In the early days of the Church-visible everyone but heretics shared the same beliefs, there being no real variations to speak of.

How interesting this is, when today we see not an unified faith but a fractured if not garbled version amongst Christians, who think it acceptable to have their own personalised ‘faith’ though it does not coincide with what scripture says. I find it sad that so many believers truly think they can ‘interpret’ scripture as they wish, when scripture interprets itself! As I have found many times in communication with these folks, they throw out absurd ideas, daring to call them ‘interpretation’ or ‘theology’.

Paul’s message was also the “acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness.” ‘Acknowledging’ is reference to ‘precise and accurate knowledge’, again proving that, in the main, everyone shared exactly the same interpretation of scripture. It was truth ‘after’ godliness. ‘After’ is exactly the same word as ‘according to’, kata.

The ‘truth’ can be objective or subjective, or both. In this case it concerns the teachings of Christ, and whatever God says generally and specifically, free of any human sinful input, because it is wholly of God. This ‘truth’ also means it is opposite to the deceit and falsity of other ‘religions’, and definitely opposite to the teachings and claims of heretics within the churches. Thus, Paul is saying that what he says as an apostle can be trusted, because it has no human taint.

Many say that the Bible writers were ‘inspired’, but this is not good enough. No doubt they were ‘inspired’ by what God said and what Christ did. But, the Bible is not ‘inspired’ via writers – each writer was given the *exact* words to convey to others. This is because God spoke directly to each one, through the Holy Spirit.

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Many works of theology and teaching are 'inspired' or influenced by God's word or by God Himself – but only the Bible is 100% perfect truth as given directly by God Himself. This is what makes scripture unique and trustworthy... and it is why so many heretics and atheists want to destroy belief in its totally-divine source. Using the word 'inspired' is part of this plot.

(The Old Testament allusion to 'inspiration' in Job 32:8 means the breath of God. That is, the Spirit of God gives life and wisdom. The New Testament allusion, found in 2 Timothy 3:16, must be properly understood. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God..." This does NOT mean the *writers* were 'inspired' but that the words were given by God... *theopneustos*: God-breathed. Thus, it was not the *writers* who were inspired, but the *contents*. There is grave danger in saying mere men were 'inspired'... they were only the 'conduits' for God's words, not the minds that created the words given to them. The difference between this and the modern interpretation of the word is stark and vital).

Paul is saying that whatever he is saying is direct from God to the elect; it is an act of reverence and arises from God, not himself. What he writes has the hope of eternal life. In itself, this hope should be the spur to faith. If we know we will enter Heaven, then why should we fear anything on earth?

The word 'hope' is the English translation of *elpis*, which is originally much stronger. Today, 'hope' implies something we may, or may not, get. But, in Paul's day, *elpis* was a strong word, meaning expectation of good from God and joy in our salvation. In other words, we WILL get what we are promised by God and WILL enter Heaven because we are saved.

This expectation is greatly set-aside by many Christians, who only have a vague notion of what this expectation really is. It is vague, and so is less than satisfactory, leading to anxiety and fear that ought not exist in the person saved from hell by Jesus Christ! We can expect a total redemption from all manner of problems, because God is with us; He is our refuge in times of trouble (though many seek refuge in their own answers and so miss the opportunity to see the answers from God). In the New Testament this expectation is always good... so why do we fail so miserably to accept that, causing doubt in others who observe us?

God has promised us eternal salvation. Therefore, we should not feel we must 'endure' the woes of this world as if we are waiting intolerably for something external to this world! God is with us NOW on this earth! He hears the prayers of the righteous (as David says continually in his Psalms), and will ALWAYS come to the aid of all who trust Him truly. The fact of salvation

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alone secures every answer and help we need from God... though most of us fail to understand this or to apply it to our lives.

Yet, all this was promised to us “before the world began”. That is, in eternity. Anything founded in eternity has always been, and cannot ever change, because God is ‘I Am’. Our salvation is in eternity and cannot be removed or taken back, not even by God. This is because He says so, and God cannot lie.

This eternal truth is now made known (‘manifested’) through preaching of the Gospel (which includes everything we read in scripture). The act of preaching and the role of preacher were given to Paul by “God our Saviour”, Jesus Christ: Paul was an herald of God’s grace and word. This is genuine preaching, not the fake preaching found in so many churches today, evidenced by its lack of power.

Few are called to be preachers and evangelists, but nevertheless take on the roles themselves, without God’s authority. Secondly, what they teach – even those who ARE called – is rarely of use or true, as preachers are more concerned with being denominationally consistent than consistent with scripture. Theirs is a humanly-devised preaching rather than God’s word spoken through the mouth of the preacher. Even the most faithful teach reformationism rather than the glorious truths of the reformation!

If you are a preacher, were you *commanded* to preach by the Holy Spirit? It is evident in many that they have usurped the role and were not elected to it by God. That is why their messages are without power and authority, having no effect on the hearers. It is why so many ask outsiders to do their job for them – visiting ‘good’ speakers and evangelistic teams, for example, or heretical and godless ‘courses’, such as Alpha. These fake preachers tend to ignore those who speak truth, instead preferring their self-elected pastoral fraternals, which act more like sanhedrins than genuine Christian groups.

Paul is writing this letter to Titus, who Paul obviously believes to be holy and a ‘son’ in Christ. Titus (‘nurse’) was a Gentile Christian, so not of the usual Jewish stock. We know no more about this man, except that he accompanied Paul on some of his journeys and helped in the work. It is possible that Titus IS named in Acts, but, being a Gentile, he probably was known under a second (perhaps ‘Justus’, a Jewish proselyte), or third name, as was common with Romans.

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Titus was a son “after the common faith”, meaning the faith held in common throughout the churches. This is another indication that there was almost no deviance from the teaching delivered by the apostles, which was from God. This faith included grace (everything given by God freely to the elect), mercy (for our many sins and wayward acts), and peace (with God, secured by Christ’s death and resurrection). Note that these are given by both the Father and the Son equally.

What Paul wrote to his fellow believers was usually connected to problems or issues they have themselves raised with him. Sometimes Paul refers to these queries, but not always. We only know by the subject matter.

Verses 5-9

1.

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

2.

If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.

3.

For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

4.

But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;

5.

Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

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We see that Paul gave Titus a very specific job to do, and “left (him) in Crete” for the purpose. This was probably during one of Paul’s journeys. Paul must have had a high regard for Titus’ spiritual abilities, for he wanted him to put matters right in various churches (“things that are wanting”). This kind of work can only be done by those not just well-versed in scripture and Christ’s teachings, but who are also personally endowed with spiritual gifts, given only by God.

Titus also had to make sure elders were appointed (ordained) in every city in Crete, under the authority of Paul, who appointed him, as instructed by the Holy Spirit. This is not to be confused with the modern pomposity of ‘ordaining’, often by college heads, and not by the local church the man will go to. This was simply Titus going to a local church, discovering who was the man chosen by God (made evident by suitable spiritual gifts and experience), and blessing him for the role. In those days, pastors were not appointed from outside the local church, but from within, and were mature men. Very unlike today!

Titus was himself ‘ordained’ or ‘appointed’ (same kind of word) by Paul, who was himself ordained by Christ to minister. The ordaining of elders in every church was to ensure purity of teaching and practice, and conformity to the truth once delivered by Paul and other apostles. Personal ‘interpretations’ were not tolerated.

As I have shown elsewhere, an ‘elder’ is a male only – no woman can take on this role; the name of the office is the same as presbyter, bishop, or pastor. They are synonymous. An elder is NOT the same as a deacon, and deacon is NOT a first step to becoming an elder. An elder has a spiritual role, whereas a deacon (who may be a female) has a more menial or physically practical role (though a deacon has to be holy and true). We see that Paul uses the words ‘elder’ and ‘bishop’ interchangeably.

The qualities needed in an elder are given: He must be blameless, because he is the “steward of God”. This means he must be accountable, leading a clean life that cannot be reprovved or challenged. The structure of modern churches does not lend itself to accountability, but to secrecy, with sin brushed under the carpet. The elder must be the same outside his home as he is within it, so that he cannot be charged with anything untoward. It does not just mean a man is not found guilty – but, that no charge is made in the first place. How many live such a life? I remember a time years ago when half a dozen well-known pastors fell through sexual sin in the same time period. They immediately lost any spiritual authority they had and brought shame upon God’s name.

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The elder must only have one wife. This does not refer to divorce and remarriage, but to having several wives. His children, too, must be 'faithful' – trustworthy and reliable, and not charged with any offence, such as rioting and unruliness. Rioting refers to immorality and disobedience, including sexual promiscuity. This speaks of today's youngsters! 'Unruly' means what it says – disobedient and of nasty character.

The youngsters of ALL Christians should be of this kind, but especially so for elders' families. If an elder cannot keep control of his own family, then he may not be an elder. This means the Christian must control his children from birth, teaching them constantly in the ways of obedience, by example and by gentle teaching, and not by undue strictness, which can have a bad effect. It also means that if a child runs riot or refuses to obey the parents, he or she must be cast out of the home, or the elder is defamed by his child's activities.

These are hard words, but we must bear in mind that the office of elder is vital in any local church, for he must be the epitome of godliness, a 'role model' who points the way to God. He cannot do this if his own children are known for their disobedience. Therefore, his dealings with his children are a guide for discipline in general.

Paul repeats his command: that the bishop (elder/pastor) must be blameless, and part of this is to make sure his children do not bring shame upon his home or his pastorate. After all, he is the "steward of God", a Christian teacher of others who oversees the local church. How can he guide a member or a church if his children are unruly?

The elder will not be "self-willed" – arrogant and pleasing himself. Yet, is this not what many modern pastors are like? They act as if they own the local church, and are business managers, instead of equals with a given role, one amongst many. Also, he must be able to control his temper. Or, rather, not have a temper-problem at all. If one is prone to anger, it shows that he has not handed over his sinfulness to God to be dealt with. Anger is a way of controlling others, of dominating them; it is self-indulgent sin. No Christian should be of this kind, let alone a pastor.

An elder must not be "given to wine". This does NOT mean he cannot drink wine – Jesus and Christians at that time all drank alcoholic wine. It means he must not drink excessively, so that he becomes 'given' to the effects, especially drunkenness. It is always unwise to drink wine to

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the point of being unable to function properly, or to think clearly, whether one is Christian or not. But, it behoves all Christians to act responsibly and to always be in control of themselves. Otherwise, Satan will indeed use the presence of wine (or any other alcoholic drink) to lead a Christian to act or speak unwisely. (Drinking wine is a personal choice).

Yet another characteristic of an elder is that he is not prone to hit out. Not just physically, but also verbally; the man who is always quarrelsome is also tiresome to be around! It is wrong when people have to 'walk on broken glass' so as to placate a man who is ready for a fight!

Nor must an elder be "given to filthy lucre". Nowhere in scripture are we told that having money and being rich is wrong. The sin comes in *loving* money and always being ready to make quick gains for the sake of becoming richer, which is a form of greed. The root word refers to filthiness and dishonour, and so it is, for a man who thinks only of gaining money is easily diverted from holiness.

After listing several sinful anti-qualities, Paul then gives some good qualities to be found in every pastor. For example, he must be a "lover of hospitality". This is one word – philoxenes – in Greek (showing that there is more than one word for 'love' in scripture. I have found 22 at least!). It simply means to be generous to guests... not giving them the cheapest food and drink, or cutting corners and then keeping the best for ourselves, or loathing company. It does not mean the pastor must always have guests, but only that when he has them he should be a good host. I try to be, but am not very good at the 'chat' parts! Whereas, my sisters are excellent with that part, I prefer to remain quiet, but they are very good at socialising. I keep trying!

The pastor must be a "lover of good men (includes 'women')", or, goodness itself. This is another word for 'love' – philagathos: 'loving goodness' and, consequently, those who practice it. Sadly, many modern Christian pastors prefer other pastors who believe as they do, even if they have obvious personality flaws.

The pastor must be "sober". This has nothing to do with alcohol, which was dealt with earlier. It means to have one's senses about him; to be sane and have a sound mind. It also means to control desires, not to be impulsive and to be temperate. Needless to say, a pastor may not, then, be one riddled with psychiatric ailments, whether these are depression, anxiety, or worse, including what are called 'psychoses'.

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The reason is obvious: the man who is not in possession of his mind is a liability, whose beliefs and teachings cannot be trusted. “of sound kind” mainly refers to spiritual beliefs, but also alludes to mental/emotional disorders, all of which are examples of sin. (There are a few cases of physically-induced psychiatric disorders, but these are comparatively rare, and are seen to be illnesses, not mere emotional problems). Thus, if an elder is openly affected by these maladies, he must be removed from office, not harshly, but with compassion, for all of us can fall foul of our emotions and mental functions.

To be ‘sober’ also includes being in control and not to act impulsively. To be temperate means to act in a balanced way and not to allow personal desires for anything to become prominent, so prominent as to affect one’s life and thoughts. The man who cannot keep this self-control is not in a position to pastor others. It seems that too many churches allow pastors and others to act as they wish, often badly, and to excuse it with: “it is their personality”! A person’s personality must change after salvation, so that it reflects Christ and not sinful desires and actions.

The pastor must also be “just, holy, temperate”. To be ‘just’ in this context is to live by divine laws and teachings. In other words, to be righteous, to live free of outward sins, to be upright in dealings and to observably live by God’s commands. This ties in with being blameless. It includes passing right judgments about others; a pastor must have the courage to face wrong-doers with God’s word, but must not be judgmental. (I hope you are not like so many, who think ‘judgmental’ and ‘judge’ are the same?)

‘Holy’ is to be undefiled by sin and living a godly life. To be ‘temperate’ is to be spiritually and mentally strong, with power over wickedness and in spiritual matters, being self-controlled in all things.

The pastor must hold fast to the “faithful word as he hath been taught”. When Paul said that, he was talking about the teachings given to elders by the apostles, whose word came from Christ. The same applies today: all pastors may only pass on God’s word, and nothing more. They have no right whatever to invent stories, or to ‘spiritualise’, or to interpret as they wish. It is important to understand that God’s word has only ONE meaning and so interpretations can only be of one kind. Try telling this to preachers today!

By adhering only to the word of God, the pastor can then present a reasonable defence against “gainsayers”, who contradict God’s word, or who refuse to obey pastors whose words come from scripture. Only in this way can we exhort (teach) and convince others. This is nothing like

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the Arminian heresy, which says we can alter people's minds if we use clever and continuous arguments. Rather, it is God's word that changes men, not us.

Verses 10&11

1.

For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision:

2.

Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

Paul is saying these things with reason. He begins verse 10 with a conjunction, *gar*, that joins verse 9 with verse 10. He said there were "many vain talkers and deceivers". In my own ministry I warn against these people, asserting that most who occupy pulpits should not be there, because they are not called by God. They are "vain talkers" and even "deceivers". Most, though, are just uncalled. What Paul means by "unruly" is that they are not under subjection to God or to man; they are disobedient to God's word, and are unfit for pastorship. They speak idly, without true aim, and what they say is senseless. Their aim is to deceive listeners, seducing their minds. Many pastors fall into this description, but so do many supposed 'Christians'.

I once had one 'Christian' in our church who, no matter what Biblical discussion we had, would never be able to articulate as a Christian. He was utterly useless when it came to talking about Christ, which puzzled me. However, some time later, it turned out that he was an adulterer who cleverly and deceptively pretended to be a Christian. His lack of verbal skills was caused by his unsaved state – he simply did not understand what we were talking about.

Paul told Titus that Jews were a special problem, particularly if they became Christians. (Not all of them, of course). We are reminded of the Jewish Christians who took Peter and others to task in Jerusalem; and the unsaved Jews elsewhere who made it their business to inflict violence upon him. Much is said about Islam hating Judaism, but Judaism hates Christianity with as much vehemence.

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Paul does not mince his words. He says these people “must (have their mouths) stopped”. They must be silenced, by casting them out and by opposing what they say publicly. Few Christians today would have the spiritual backbone to do this. They allow all kinds of evil to arise without judging the causes. We must do this because these people “subvert whole houses” by teaching what is wrong and sinful, because they get a lot of money for doing so.

Pastors of ‘mega-churches’ are of this kind, but so are many in smaller local churches. By leaving them in office, a local church or group will reap the whirlwind, as sin proliferates and God is inched out. In this way many local churches that began well can end in disaster. Sadly, most pastors see their ‘calling’ in terms of income and ‘advancement’ even if what they earn is small, because they have their eye on the ‘big prize’ of a favoured church or denomination.

Verses 12-16

1.

One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.

2.

This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;

3.

Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

4.

Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

5.

They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

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Paul mentions a case in point, a man who told the congregation that “all Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies (lazy and gluttonous)”. So, he was applying his own prejudices to a whole country. This is judgmentalism and disharmony. Of course, all people in a nation cannot be of one character! They may share certain characteristics, but no more than any other nation. By speaking in such an inflammatory way without reason, then, the preacher was worthless and godless.

Paul says that what he has heard about the man was true. He counsels Titus: when you come across such men, rebuke them sharply. Not leave it, as most do today, but to speak with hard words (not harsh). They must be left in no doubt that what they say is harmful and sinful. The aim is not to punish them, but to draw them back to truth, so that they are “sound in the faith”. If we see or hear sin, no matter how small, we must always tackle it, so that one sin does not add itself to another. If we all speak to each other in this basic way, with love, we can avoid messy and angry retorts if we leave the sin grow, and hopefully stop a full-scale ‘war of words’.

Do not let them take notice of Jewish fables, says Paul. We have come across such fables when Jews told Peter that Gentile converts must be circumcised. Until he was roundly rebuked by Paul, it is what Peter allowed. The same care must be taken with “commands of men”. In my book ‘Patchwork Quilt Theology’ I detailed many such ‘commands’, showing that the modern churches are riddled with them, to their detriment. Do not accept commands at face value, if there is no immediate command in scripture, in which the human command is rooted. Too many pastors love to rule their roost, but their teaching “turn(s) from the truth”.

Those who are sinful will see sin everywhere, and will teach it. But those who are saved have renewed minds and hearts, so will see things as God sees them (verse 15). The deceivers, the unsaved who pretend to be saved, claim to know God, but what they do every day proves otherwise. These are called “abominable” by Paul. They are disobedient and worthless, being reprobate. Do not listen to similar words. If someone constantly speaks opposite to scripture, claiming to be saved, do not believe them. Treat them for what they are – abominable and reprobate. Otherwise, you will be tainted by their sins.

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