

# Epistle to Titus

by Arno Clemens Gaebelein

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*The Epistle to Titus emphasizes the importance of godliness and sound doctrine in the church, and the need for believers to live a life that is pleasing to God.*

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 8:16, Titus 1:4-5, Titus 1:10, Titus 2:1, Titus 2:11, Titus 3:1, Titus 3:9, Titus 3:12

**Topics:** "Sound Doctrine", "Godly Living"

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## Description

Arno Clemens Gaebelein preaches on the Epistle to Titus, addressing the practical instructions and warnings given by Paul to Titus. The Epistle emphasizes the importance of sound doctrine being manifested in a godly walk, with a focus on the truth being after godliness. Divided into three sections, the Epistle covers instructions and warnings, things which become sound doctrine, and guidance in relation to the world and false teachers.

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## Transcript

Titus, to whom this Epistle is addressed, was a Greek convert of the apostle (Titus 1:4; Gal. 2:3). We have little knowledge of him. From the Epistle to the Galatians we know that he accompanied Paul and Barnabas in their journey to Jerusalem to attend the council in which the question of the relation of believing Gentiles to the law was decided (Acts 15). From the Second Epistle to the Corinthians we learn that Paul sent him to Corinth to gather the collection (2 Cor. 8:1-6) and that he discharged the duty in a zealous way. "But thanks be to God, who put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you" (2 Cor. 8:16-17). Paul also stated in the Second Corinthian Epistle that he had no rest when he did not find Titus (2 Cor. 2:13), but when he came Paul was greatly comforted. "Nevertheless God, who comforteth those who are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus" (2 Cor. 7:6). The Epistle shows that he was in the island of Crete. Paul visited this island in company with Titus, leaving him there. Titus probably did not stay long in Crete, for Paul asked that he should meet him at Nicopolis (3:12). This is all that can be said on the person of Titus.

The contents of this Epistle are of the same nature as the Epistles to Timothy, though the departure from the faith so prominent in the Epistles to Timothy is less prominent in this Epistle. That the truth must be after, or according to, godliness is especially emphasized; the truth must be manifested in a godly walk.

The Division of the Epistle to Titus

The Epistle contains practical instructions. We make three divisions.

I. INSTRUCTIONS AND WARNINGS (1)

II. THINGS WHICH BECOME SOUND DOCTRINE (2)

III. IN RELATION TO THE WORLD AND FALSE TEACHERS (3)

Analysis and Annotations

I. INSTRUCTIONS AND WARNINGS

CHAPTER 1

1. The salutation (1:1-4)

2. Instructions concerning elders (1:5-9)

3. Warnings against false teachers (1:10-16)

Verses 1-4

Paul calls himself in writing to Titus "a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ," for he speaks in these introductory words of God's elect, and their faith in Him; and the promise of eternal life, God, who cannot lie, gave before the dispensations began; and that His Word is now manifested through preaching which was committed unto him by our Saviour-God. God's elect are those who have trusted in Christ. They have personal faith in God and know His love and are in relationship with Him. But such a faith and relationship demands godliness; therefore the statement, "The acknowledgment of the truth which is after godliness." These two, truth and godliness, belong together. If the truth is given up or not held, then godliness also is given up; the truth must be manifested in godliness. As to statement on the promise of life before the ages began, see annotations on 2 Tim. 1:9.

Verses 5-9

Paul had left Titus in Crete . From Acts 2:11 we learn that the inhabitants of Crete were present on the day of Pentecost and heard Peter preach. These Cretan Jews may have brought the gospel to the island. Titus is commissioned by Paul to set the things in order which were wanting, and to appoint elders in every city. (For discussion that bishops are elders see annotations on 1 Timothy 3.) We do not find the same intimacy between him and Titus as that intimacy and confidence which existed between Paul and Timothy. He does not open his heart to him as he did to Timothy. He invests Titus with authority to appoint elders and states the qualifications the elder must possess. These qualifications are also mentioned in the First Epistle to Timothy (1 Tim. 3:1-7). Here is added that their children must be faithful and not accused of riot or of being unruly. The bishop must also be blameless as God's steward, not self-willed (headstrong), not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, no seeker of filthy lucre. What he is to be is given in verses 8 and 9. "But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good, sober-minded, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word according to the doctrine taught, that he may be able to exhort with sound doctrine and to convict the gainsayers." Thus we have again that godliness and sound doctrine belong together.

Verses 10-16

He states that there were many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers especially they of the circumcision. The Judaizing teachers were at work among the Cretans. Titus must have been especially distasteful to them, for he was an uncircumcised Greek. These Cretan Jews who claimed to have accepted Christianity worked evil in the assembly. The apostle demands that their mouths must be stopped, for they subverted whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of base gain. The national traits of the Cretans are then described. One of their own prophets had said, "The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons." This is a quotation from Epimenides, who lived six hundred years before Christ. The Cretans were classed with the Cappadocians and Cilicians (all beginning in the Greek with a "K") as the most evil and corrupt in the Greek world. And Paul testifies to the truth of it, "This witness is true." They must be rebuked sharply, so that they may be sound in the faith, "not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth." These Judaizing teachers were ascetics, forbidding certain things, making rules for the outward conduct. Certain things were forbidden by their ordinances and commandments; yet though they were fasting and continent, they were, because unregenerated, inwardly defiled and unbelieving. Paul brands these Judaizers in this Epistle as "defiled and unbelieving," with a confession that they know God, but in works they denied Him. He speaks of them as abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.

## II. THINGS WHICH BECOME SOUND DOCTRINE

### CHAPTER 2

#### 1. Adorning the doctrine of our Saviour-God (2:1-10)

#### 2. The grace of God and its work (2:11-15)

##### Verses 1-10

"But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine." The sound doctrine or healthful teaching must be accompanied and witnessed to by the right condition of soul, a godly character. The doctrine of God our Saviour must be adorned in all things. Aged men are exhorted to be temperate, grave, sober-minded, sound in faith, in love and in patience. Sound doctrine must of necessity produce such a character. Aged women are to be reverent in demeanor, not slanderers (1 Tim. 3:11) nor to be enslaved by too much wine. In the First Epistle to Timothy deacons are exhorted "not to be given to much wine." Here the exhortation is in the original in a stronger form, for the Cretans were known, and especially the women, for being slaves of strong drink. They are to be teachers of what is good. This is not contradicting 1 Cor. 14:34 and 1 Tim. 2:12. The teaching of the aged woman is here defined. She is to teach young women to be sober, to love their husbands and their children, to be discreet, chaste, busy at home, good, obedient to their own husbands; that the Word of God may not be blasphemed. These are important instructions. They show that the Christian woman's sphere is first of all at home. The disregard of this has more than once wrecked Christian families. This is the great danger in these last days to put women into a place which does not belong to her.

Young men are also to be discreet. Titus who is charged to deliver these exhortations was himself to be a pattern of good works. His example was to confirm his word. In teaching he was to show uncorruptness. Likewise gravity, setting forth the doctrines with dignity and in all seriousness, and sincerity. (What a contrast with certain evangelists and preachers of our day, who act like clowns and make sport of sacred things; instead of teaching the young reverence, they drag down holy things!) "Sound speech that cannot be condemned"--so that those who oppose may be silenced, unable to speak anything evil of the servant

of God. When the preacher or teacher does not practise what he preaches it becomes a great detriment to sound doctrine. How great a stumbling block this is!

Servants (slaves) are next exhorted to be obedient to their masters. They were not to forget their place. Though they had been saved and become children of God and heirs of God, their earthly relationship was that of slaves, and as such they were to strive to please their masters in all things, not answering them in contradiction, not purloining but showing all good fidelity, "that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Chrysostom said: "The heathen do not judge of the Christian's doctrine from the doctrine, but from his actions and life." The world does the same today. And so even slaves in their low estate could bear a witness to the Saviour God by adorning His doctrine.

#### Verses 11-15

"For the grace of God, bringing salvation for all men, hath appeared, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in the present age, awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all lawlessness, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."

This is a blessed and comprehensive statement of the gospel and Christianity. It may be looked upon as embodying all the great apostle taught in his God-revealed gospel, in a practical way. The grace of God hath appeared, and it appeared in the person of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him His grace is made known. His finished work is the source of it. It flows from the cross. And this grace comes to man with salvation. It brings salvation, not to a certain class of men, but it brings salvation for all men. Because all men are lost, and therefore in need of salvation, unable to save themselves; the grace of God bringing an unconditional, a perfect and eternal salvation hath appeared, offering that salvation to all. And when this salvation is accepted by faith in the Son of God and the believing sinner is saved by grace, the same grace teaches how to live and walk here below in newness of life.

Grace instructs to renounce all ungodliness and all lusts that find their gratification in this age. But grace does more than that; it supplies the power to do this. It bestows upon the believer a new nature and the Holy Spirit, and walking in the power of all this, the lusts of the flesh are not fulfilled. And renouncing ungodliness and worldly lusts, the believer, saved by grace, is to walk with grace as his guide, instructor and power. That walk as concerning ourselves is to be soberly; as to our fellowman it is to be righteously; as to God, godly. It teaches something additional. We are to await the blessed hope, "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." He who gave Himself for us, to redeem us from all lawlessness,\* who has purified us unto Himself a peculiar people, He is coming again. He will appear in glory, and grace has given us the blessed promise that we shall be with Him in glory, beholding His glory and sharing it also. And this blessed hope is the most powerful motive for a sober, a righteous and godly walk in this present age.

\*1 With respect to the conduct of Christians towards the world, grace has banished violence, and the spirit of rebellion and resistance which agitates the heart of those who believe not, and which has its source in the self-will that strives to maintain its own rights relatively to others. The Christian has his portion, his inheritance, elsewhere; he is tranquil and submissive here, ready to do good. Even when others are violent and unjust towards him, he bears it in remembrance that once it was no otherwise with himself. a difficult lesson, for violence and injustice stir up the heart; but the thought that it is sin, and that we also

were formerly its slaves, produces patience and piety. Grace alone has made the difference, and according to that grace are we to act towards others (Synopsis of the Bible).

These things Titus was to speak, to exhort; and also to rebuke with all authority. This is still the calling of every true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### III. IN RELATION TO THE WORLD AND FALSE TEACHERS

#### CHAPTER 3

1. Instructions (3:1-8)

2. Warnings (3:9-11)

3. Directions (3:12-15)

#### Verses 1-8

He asks Titus to remind all believers to be subject to rulers, principalities and powers (Greek: Magistracies and authorities, Rom. 13:1), to yield obedience and to be ready for every good work. An ancient historian, Diodorus Siculus, speaks of the riotous insubordination of the Cretans. They were to speak evil of no man, nor were they to be contentious, but show all gentleness and all meekness towards all men. Our own rights must be yielded, but never the rights of God. If authorities demand what is against sound doctrine then God must be obeyed more than man. This is indicated by the exhortation "to be ready for every good work." Meekness towards all men is to characterize those who are no longer of the world, but who are still in it. Such meekness towards all, not only towards fellow-believers, but towards all men, adorns the doctrine of our Saviour-God, and is a commendation of the grace of God which offers salvation to all men.

Then follows an additional reason why Christians should be gentle and meek towards all men. "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." It is a look backward, what they were in their unregenerate condition. These are the true characteristics of man in the flesh. Here is an answer to the question, What is sin? Sin is foolishness, disobedience, deception, slavery to lusts and unsatisfying pleasures, a life of malice, envy and hatred. It is lawlessness. And such is the natural man in all ages. What was true of these Cretans nineteen hundred years ago is true today of every unregenerated person.

And then follows a "but." (See Eph. 2:13.) "But when the kindness and love to man\* of our Saviour-God appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He has shed upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that having been justified by His grace, we might be heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

\*"Love to man" in the Greek is "Philanthropy." Our Lord Jesus Christ is the great Lover of men, Philanthropist, as no human being could ever be.)

For such as the Cretans were, and we all are, the kindness and love of our Saviour-God appeared; and this Saviour-God is Christ Himself, He by whom and for whom all things were created. All who have believed and trusted in the kindness and love of God as manifested in Christ can testify in fullest assurance, "according to His mercy He saved us," and own it likewise that it is "not by works of

righteousness which we have done."

And this is accomplished by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. The washing (or bath) of regeneration is the new birth. Of this our Lord spoke to Nicodemus (John 3) and also to His disciples when He washed their feet. "He that is washed (bathed) needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; and ye are clean, but not all" (John 13:10). He spoke in these words of the fact that His disciples, except Judas, were born again, and therefore they were clean every whit. The washing has nothing whatever to do with water-baptism; water-baptism cannot save nor help in the salvation of a sinner, nor produce regeneration. What is the renewing of the Holy Spirit? It is distinct from regeneration. The Holy Spirit is the active agent in the new birth; imparts the new nature and then indwells the believer, and as such He does His blessed work by renewing the inward man day by day (2 Cor. 4:16). He is shed upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, and gives power to all who walk in the Spirit. On the fact that the word "regeneration" is found only once more in the New Testament (Matt. 19:28) the late F.W. Grant made the following interesting comment in connection with this passage.

"The Lord promises to the twelve that 'in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of His kingdom,' they also shall 'sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel .' 'The regeneration' is in this passage the millennial state; but thus we may see already the difference between it and the idea of new birth, whatever the connection may be between these. The millennial regeneration is not a new life infused into the world, but it is a new state of things brought about by the new government over it. Thus, the Lord speaks of the throne of the Son of man and of thrones for His disciples. The throne of the world in the hands of the Perfect Ruler is, in fact, what brings about the regeneration. Righteousness now reigns. In the new earth it will dwell; but in the millennium there is yet neither the full reality; nor, therefore, the full permanence of deliverance from evil. Righteousness reigns, and evil is not suffered any more, but the full blessing waits to be manifested in that which is eternal and not millennial. The subjugation of evil, Christ's foes put under His feet, goes on through the millennium, in different stages, towards completeness. It is the preparation for eternity, but not the eternal state itself.

"It is plain, therefore, that there is a parallel between the stages of God's preparation of the earth for blessing and that of the individual man. The present stage of the earth is that out of which the Christian has been delivered, the state of bondage to corruption, the dominion of sin. The present state of the Christian is that which the earth itself waits for, the time when the power of sin will be broken and righteousness will reign. For us righteousness reigns now, but the conflict with sin is not over. This, in the millennium, will be fully seen at the end, when there is once more the outbreak of evil, Satan being let loose. What follows this is the dissolution of the present heavens and earth and the coming of the new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness, just as the dissolution or the change of the body makes way for the perfect eternal state with us. Thus there is a complete parallel, which we cannot be wrong in accepting as that which will help us with the expression here. 'The washing of regeneration' is the deliverance from the power of sin, which is no more tolerated, but which is not, by any means, wholly removed. 'The renewing of the Holy Spirit' is that which is constantly needed to supplement this, although the word used does not speak of a mere reviving or refreshing constantly, but rather of a change into that which is new--thus, of ways, habits-as the light more and more penetrates, and the word of God manifests more and more its perfection and its power for the soul."

Being then saved according to His mercy by the washing of regeneration and receiving the Holy Spirit and having been justified by His grace, we become also heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

The practical side, godliness in life and walk, is once more connected with these preceding statements of sound doctrine. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."

#### Verses 9-11

Foolish questions and genealogies, contentions and striving about the law must be avoided, for they are unprofitable and vain. How many of these things are about us! Some are more occupied with the ten lost tribes and their supposed recovery, according to the Anglo-Israel hallucination, than with the grace and glory of God; and others are given to questions of law, like Seventh-day Adventism--that evil system. All these things are indeed unprofitable and vain. The heretic is one who sets up his own opinions and then causes division in the body of Christ. If such a one after a second admonition continues in his ways, he is to be rejected, for he proves that he is self-willed and not subject to the Word of God--"Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself."

#### Verses 12-15

In the closing directions and greetings Artemas is mentioned first; his name does not occur elsewhere. Tychicus is mentioned in 2 Tim. 4:12. He was sent by Paul to Ephesus ; he probably was sent later to Crete to take the place of Titus. Zenas the lawyer and Apollos (Acts 18:24) were travelling companions, and the apostle expresses his loving care and interest in them.

"Observe also that we have the two kinds of laborers: those who were in personal connection with the apostle as fellow-laborers, who accompanied him, and whom he sent elsewhere to continue the work he had begun, when he could no longer carry it on himself, and those who labored freely and independently of him. But there was no jealousy of this double activity. He did not neglect the flock that were dear to him. He was glad that any who were sound in the faith should water the plants which he himself had planted. He encourages Titus to show them all affection, and to provide whatever they needed in their journey. This thought suggests to him the counsel that follows: namely, that it would be well for Christians to learn how to do useful work in order to supply the wants of others as well as their own" (Synopsis of the Bible).

Then the final exhortations, once more "to maintain good works" and his final greeting. "All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all."

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