

Titus: Conclusion

Call to Worship: Psalm 119:89-96

Hymn #127- *Let us Love, and Sing, and Wonder*

1st Scripture: Titus 1

Hymn Insert- *Speak O Lord*

2nd Scripture: Titus 3:12-15

Hymn #676- *More About Jesus*

Introduction

This morning, we come now to the conclusion of this short Epistle, written by the Apostle Paul to Titus. From the outset, we saw that Paul's two main reasons for writing this letter were to deal with the poisonous influence of false teachers, who were influencing the brethren at Crete with false teachings, and to raise up qualified elders to lead the church, going forward, especially as a means of preserving good, sound, biblical doctrine.

And to this end, we have further discovered the unbreakable connection between embracing good doctrine and exhibiting God-honoring behavior. And we have also seen how the glorious indicatives of Scripture (those simple and yet profound truths which describe all that God has freely done for us in Christ), contain the very motivation and power that are necessary to obey any and all of God's good and righteous imperative commands.

Well, now, as we conclude this letter, following a brief exposition of the remaining text, we will put on the final capstone with a few relevant applications.

I. Conclusion of the Book

“When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there” (vs. 12).

As I stated when we began this Book, Titus was only to remain at Crete for a limited period of time. In fact, Paul had gone to Crete with Titus, and when he saw the pressing need there, he left Titus behind to set things in order. We recall Paul's words in chapter 1:5, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—.” And so, here Paul speaks of soon sending Artemis or Tychicus, to relieve Titus, so that he can return to Paul, meeting him at Nicopolis, where Paul would plan on spending the winter.

As far as the two men mentioned here, Artemis is mentioned nowhere else in the Scriptures, leaving us no additional information about him, and Tychicus, we have already considered pretty thoroughly, when we finished working through Paul's Second letter to Timothy. And so, for the time being, we will say nothing further about these men.

Moving on then, Paul adds, "Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing" (vs. 13). More than likely, these two men, Zenas and Apollos, were the bearers of this letter to Titus, which is why Paul commands Titus to send them on their journey quickly (either their journey back to Paul, or to wherever Paul would have had them go next), well supplied for their travels (lacking nothing). As we've seen in Paul's other Epistles, as well (and in Acts), the Apostle was constantly sending human resources to all of the churches, especially (but not limited to) when he himself was under house arrest or in prison.

We have no other information about Zenas, but it is encouraging to see that even lawyers can be saved! More than likely, he was a former Jewish lawyer and scribe, whom God had graciously called into His kingdom, and he retained the same title, using his former resourcefulness as a means of now serving Christ. To be sure, there were no small amount of squabbles over uses and misuses of the Law, even here at Crete, as we have seen in our study of Titus. And so, Zenas would have been a very useful tool, in the belt, for Paul. And then, Apollos, of course, is that well known figure, whom we looked at, in our Adult Sunday School class, when we studied the Book of Acts. He was a very faithful and powerfully gifted preacher, who boldly contended with the Jews and broke ground for the gospel, in various parts of the Roman Empire. Needless to say, the Lord used many gifted men in the early church, to aid His Apostles in laying the foundation of the church.

Continuing on, Paul adds, "And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful" (vs. 14). I think that the word "also" here, is meant to piggyback the command that Paul has just given Titus, just prior to this, when he charged Titus to ensure that Zenas and Apollos "lacked nothing" in their journey onward. In other words, he is saying, "Likewise, also, as you supply the needs of Zenas and Apollos liberally, let your giving example be a pattern, which the rest of the brethren there seek to follow

and maintain. Exhort them to be on the lookout, continuously, seeking to maintain good works, meeting urgent needs, so that they may not be unfruitful.

Now, brethren, let's just camp on this ground for a few moments (before moving on), because Paul gives us a nugget of insight into fruit bearing here, which we don't want to miss. It's too easy to just pass over this statement, especially that last phrase, "that they may not be unfruitful." It's important to recognize here, brethren, that Paul ties fruit bearing to "maintaining good works" and "meeting urgent needs." Now, this should seem obvious, but my main reason for pointing this out, is that, we know that, as our Lord Jesus has stated in John's gospel (John 15:1-8, 17), that the will of God in our salvation is that we would produce fruit (while abiding in Him, the Vine). But, if we are to produce fruit, we need to be a people who are "outward looking," considering the needs of others, especially in the body of Christ. In other words, brethren, if we are not consistently seeking to maintain good works toward others, and if we are not considering the needs of others (be they physical or spiritual), we will, as Paul here mentions, "become unfruitful."

And so, there is a legitimate place for self examination, where we ought to periodically ask ourselves if we are bearing fruit, or if we have become unfruitful. And the gauge, by which, we should measure the answer to these questions, should be directed toward our involvement in the church. Simply put, if you are not involved in the church, if you are not striving to "maintain" good works, with others as the object of those good works, then you are being unfruitful. Now, I'm not suggesting that this means that you are unsaved, but it should motivate you to examine the course you are on, to see where you stand, regarding this important matter. Pursuing holiness is important; dealing with remaining sin is important, but our sanctification must also include striving to learn to fix our eyes more and more on the needs of others, and not simply our own interests. And so, let us periodically evaluate ourselves, and let us continually re-examine our focus, to see if we are indeed bearing fruit, or if we have become unfruitful.

Finally, Paul closes with his customary farewell: "All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen" (vs. 15). Paul sends his greetings from all who are with him, and to all of the brethren at Crete ("those who love us in the faith": in Christ, the people of God must and ought to love one another, and so, he greets those who love

Paul and his co-laborers, because it would be unheard of, for a Christian to not love his brother/sister in Christ. “How can you love God, who you can’t see, if you don’t love your brother, whom you can see.” To love God, must and will, drive anyone who truly loves Him, to love the brethren).

And of course, Paul commends God’s grace to them, as that critical and essential resource, which alone, can bring about any growth and change in the Christian life. And notice, he doesn’t limit this commendation to Titus. He states, “Grace *be with you all*. Amen.” The assumption is, both, that Titus will read this letter in the presence of the Cretans, and that Paul, of course, desires Titus and the Cretans to receive a continual flow of God’s grace, so that Titus will have all that he needs to fulfill his responsibilities there, and the Cretans will have all that they need to give heed to Paul’s commands and Titus’s oversight. And, of course, the “Amen,” which means “Truly,” distinguishes Paul’s commendation of grace, from only being a customary commendation, further affirming their true need of God’s grace, with an exclamation point!

II. Closing Thoughts and Applications

1) Having worked through 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus (which are often referred to as the “Pastoral Epistles,” since they are addressed to those who are in pastoral/leadership positions), I would hope that we have all become convinced of the great value and place that sound doctrine has in the life of the church, as a whole, and as a whole made up of individuals. What we believe does indeed matter, because God’s means of bringing about change in our lives, involves the use of sound doctrine. And so, when someone says to you, “doctrine divides, we just need love,” you can graciously point them to these letters, showing them that we are incapable of loving God or one another, in a way that truly pleases God, if our love is not grounded in sound doctrine.

2) Let us not forget the essential “indicative/imperative” model, which Paul uses to motivate his readers unto faithful obedience. And let us adopt this model, so that we would learn to speak to others in a way that would provide them with every bit of motivation and power, to do what God commands. And the central theme of our indicative speech, must be grounded in the gospel of grace, and all that God has freely done for us, in Christ. Drawing from all of the glorious realities which are hidden in our redemption; opening up the treasure vaults of the glory

of what God has done for us in Christ, ought to be the very foundation and grounding for all of the spiritual counsel and advice that we give to others, and the storehouse, out of which, we draw every imperative command given in Scripture. Even, and especially, in dealing with our children (and the unsaved, in general), let us never grow tired or weary of constantly bringing them back to the gospel. I can assure you that God will never rebuke you in heaven, for having spoken too much of Christ, to anyone in this life. There might be many things, of which, we would be fearful of giving an account, but speaking about and exalting Christ too much, should never concern us in this regard. Make much of Christ! Summed up in Him, is every useful indicative that will ever drive a person unto repentance and obedience toward God!

3) Finally, revel in God's remarkable use of *letters* in the New Covenant, as a means of conveying "God breathed" truth to all generations. The Bible is a profoundly amazing Book, containing all different types of literature (all different literary means of communicating truth), from narrative, to song, to prophecy, to wisdom literature, to apocalyptic vision, to letters...etc. And these letters offer a unique and compelling way of communicating the reality of God's life changing truth. Even the greetings and the instructions given, concerning the various sending and receiving of brethren, all speak to the reality of what had transpired, as the Apostles were laying the foundation of the church on the Cornerstone of Christ. These letters bring us back to the time of the early church, and we see the urgency and drama of all that was happening, with real people, real activity and real life taking place, at a time when God's Son was being proclaimed throughout the whole world. And today, we continue that work, and we see, that even in the face of two thousand years of great opposition against the church, where numerous enemies have sought to flush out the light of the Gospel, God's truth has only spread and prevailed, and Christ's Kingdom is barreling down the gates of hell! Revel in that, brethren!

But, some of you, this morning, are still in rebellion against this Christ. The gospel!

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25