



Focus Points...Titus 1

Listen To...

Paul as he gives encouragement to his true son in faith, Titus.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, You have ordained the Office of the Holy Ministry for Your church. Bless the pastors who faithfully minister in Your name. As I begin my study of Paul's Pastoral Letter to Titus, give me a greater appreciation of pastors and church professionals. Help me to be an encouragement to them, supporting them and praying for them as they share the Good News each day. Amen.

+ + +

Commentary:

Déjà vu. Even a casual reader familiar with Paul's pastoral letters to Timothy will recognize the similarities between Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus.

Of course, the similarities can be expected. Both Timothy and Titus were trusted associates of Paul. Both had been mentored and instructed by Paul for their ministries. Both Timothy and Titus were missionaries. Both Timothy and Titus struggled with similar ministry experiences in very similar circumstances. Both letters were likely written about the same time from the same prison cell near the end of Paul's life (ca. mid-60's AD). No wonder reading Titus feels like *déjà vu*.

Titus, like Timothy, was Paul's "true son in our common faith." (1:3) Paul's endearing, tender tone throughout this letter is also seen in his letters to Timothy. Again, *déjà vu*.

Note how similar the content of Titus 1 is to Paul's Letters to Timothy. As he did in Second Timothy, Paul also gave Titus a listing of instructions. The instructions are very brief and direct. To some, it appears as if Paul was in a hurry. Was this letter written just he was taken away to martyrdom? We can't be sure. However, it is obvious that Paul wasted no time and offered no unnecessary verbiage in this very direct-and-to-the-point letter.

Topic One: Paul had put Titus in charge of the ministry at Crete. He directed Titus to "straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town." (1:5) In Titus 1:6-9, Paul briefly outlined the qualifications for Elders and overseers. Not surprising, these qualifications are nearly identical to the qualifications Paul listed in I Timothy 3:1ff. *Déjà vu*.

Topic Two: Silence is golden. Whereas Paul directed Timothy to have women be silent in I Timothy 2, Titus' instructions were to have *everyone* be silent. Whenever people in the church are not learning with "quietness and submission" (I Timothy 2:11), there is trouble. Paul's prescription for straightening out the Cretan church was simple:

"They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain." (1:11)

The Greek word for "silenced" is "*epistomizo*." It literally means to "put something over one's mouth." In the ancient world, it was used for putting a bridle on a horse's mouth. It was also used for putting a muzzle or gag on an animal or person. "Can someone please put some duct tape on these people's mouths?" perhaps reflects Paul's frustration.

The present tense in Biblical Greek often means repeated, continuous action. The Greek word *epistomizo*, used in 1:11, is in the present tense. A more accurate rendering of 1:11 might be,

"They continually need to have something placed over their mouths to keep them quiet."

"Rebuke them sharply!" Paul commanded in 1:13. Those who were destroying whole households by their morose teachings must be reprovved. They must be condemned. Titus's charge was to show them their fault...over and over again (the Greek is a present tense. See above).

In 1:14-16 we find indications that the Jewish teachings were infiltrating the Cretan Church. Titus was not to give even the *slightest* attention to "those who reject the truth." (1:14)

Paul concluded chapter one with this important insight.

"To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny Him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good."

Titus 1:14-16

Paul's insight demonstrates the character of the sinful, corrupt mind. Those who are "pure," respect, honor and uphold God's ways and will. The corrupt, however, have no respect for anyone or anything. Though twice as guilty as those they condemn, they are bent to destroy anyone, especially those who uphold the Truth and follow the way of the Lord.

During and after the 2008 presidential campaign, Late Night Show host David Letterman had been a harsh critic of Alaska Governor and Vice Presidential

nominee, Sarah Palin. Unable to simply put his political sensibilities aside, he went on a personal campaign to destroy her for her belief. Repeatedly he harshly berated and belittled her, seemingly hell-bent to ruin her reputation, credibility and character. Not content to confine his criticisms to candidate Palin, he savagely criticized her daughter for being an unwed teenage mother.

Months later, in order to fend off the threat of extortion and pay millions to the extortionist, David Letterman publicly confessed his adulterous living and rampant immorality. His statement, made on his evening talk show, detailed how he had multiple sexual encounters with numerous members of his staff.

This is the kind of behavior Titus experienced. Immoral, godless people were attacking his pure life and Christian values. But, Paul reminded him, “nothing is pure” to those who don’t believe. They have nothing to lose. They have no shame. Seemingly nothing can stop them and bridle their mouths. Unfortunately, the people who can cause the most damage often are the hardest ones to defend oneself from.

In spite of these attacks, Paul urged Titus to be firm. He must not be dissuaded from the Truth. He must maintain his pure life. He must not compromise who he was and the high standards of faith and life to retaliate against the impure. Instead, Paul urged Titus to preach boldly and work incessantly to save households—and the church—from ruin.

Titus 1 has a lesson for all Christians, especially Christian leaders. Because of the high office we share, we will be criticized and attacked. People with their own agendas will seek to demoralize and discredit us. Impure people will demolish our character.

But we must always follow the example of Christ. We must take the high road. When bitterly attacked, we must not retaliate in selfish anger. Peter wrote, “[Jesus] committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth.” (I Peter 1:22)

Can you uphold this high standard? The Lord calls His people—especially church leaders—to nothing less. We must preach the Word. We must use it to correct, instruct and rebuke in love...and love alone.

Prayer:

Lord of the Church, throughout the ages Satan has raised up impure people to destroy Your church. Give me the wisdom to note such individuals. Give me the resolve to take the high road to correct and minister to these people. Most of all, work in me so that I may not oppose those who serve You by self-serving actions. Instead, move me to pray for them, support them, and lift them up daily in prayer. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Thomas F. Fischer

Copyright 2009 Thomas F. Fischer
www.DailyBibleHabit.com All Rights Reserved.

+ + +

This email may be freely distributed without charge with copyright notice attached.
Groups or congregations interested in using these materials please
please contact info@DailyBibleHabit.com

TFF 10/09



www.DailyBibleHabit.com
Is Part Of *InKrist Resources*
www.Inkrist.com