

TITUS

TITUS 1 — HIS COMMISSION

The epistle to Titus was written prior to 2 Timothy. Alford, and others, suppose that after Paul's liberation from prison (see ~~<430>~~ Acts 28), he journeyed eastward as anticipated in Philemon 22 and ~~<502>~~ Philippians 1:26; 2:24, visiting Ephesus again. Other journeys to the West followed, occupying three or four years, during which time, he visited Crete in company with Titus, leaving him there to complete the organization of the church in that neighborhood. This church had probably been founded prior to this time, and now the same heresy is beginning to show itself as in the church at Ephesus over which Timothy had been set.

The epistle to Titus was probably written from some point in Asia Minor where Paul was stopping on his way to winter at Nicopolis in Greece (3:12). Crete is a small island west of Cyprus where the waters of the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas meet. No account is found in Acts as to the circumstances under which the church originated there, but probably the Gospel was borne to the island by the Jewish converts at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost.

Of Titus himself little is known. The earliest references to him are in Galatians, where we learn that he was a Gentile, probably one of Paul's converts, who accompanied him and Barnabas to Jerusalem at the first council (~~<450>~~ Acts 15; see also Galatians 11:1-4). He is mentioned again in 2 Corinthians, where he seems to have been sent by Paul on a mission to Corinth from Ephesus (~~<408>~~ 2 Corinthians 8:6; 12:18). See other references to him in that epistle, in chapters 2 and 7. For a number of years he is lost sight of after this, until we now find him at Crete. His later career does not seem to have been all that it might have been so far as his loyalty to the apostle is concerned, if we may judge from ~~<5040>~~ 2 Timothy 4:10. During Paul's second imprisonment at Rome he seems not to have remained with him.

The epistle may be outlined thus:

THE SALUTATION (VV. 1-4)

THE COMMISSION TO TITUS (VV. 5-9)

In these verses it will be seen that the duties of Titus at Crete were substantially the same as those of Timothy at Ephesus. Reference to that will throw light on this.

THE DESCRIPTION OF FALSE TEACHERS (VV. 10-16)

The need of elders and overseers such as Paul had indicated, was seen in the heresies that were in the church, and which were of the same character as those mentioned in the epistle to Timothy. The errorists were chiefly Jews (v. 10). The language in verses 12-13 is striking, since Paul there quotes from one of their own poets against them (Epimenides), whose witness is borne out by Livy, Plutarch, Polybius and Strabo, who speak of the Cretan's love of gain, natural ferocity, fraud, falsehood, and general depravity. Titus did not have an easy place to fill, and his work ought to bring comfort to Christian workers under not very different surroundings today.

There is a statement in verse 15 that calls for particular attention. "To the pure all things are pure" is an aphorism greatly abused. To understand it, turn back to ~~<400>~~ 1 Timothy 4:4. The reference here in Titus is the same as there (and in ~~<540>~~ Romans 14:20), to the eating of meats which the Jewish law forbade on ceremonial grounds. The Jewish professing Christians referred to previously as false teachers, were seeking to impose these customs upon the converts from Gentilism, and Paul was withstanding them by saying, as he had contended all along, and as God had taught Peter in ~~<400>~~ Acts 10, that there was nothing of this kind unclean in itself. That is, it was not sinful for a Christian to eat such things. The "pure" means those who are sanctified by faith, true believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. Such are not bound by the Jewish commandments in eating and drinking, but are at liberty to eat all the creatures of God set apart for their use, without sin. How monstrous in the light of the true meaning of the words, for people to employ them as a permission to look at obscene pictures in art galleries, and listen to lewd stories, and read impure books, and witness impure plays. These actions on their part testify that they are not the "pure" Paul has in mind, but the defiled and the unbelieving, referred to later in the

same verse. "They profess that they know God, but by their works they deny Him."

QUESTIONS

1. Locate Crete.
2. Give the history of Titus.
3. Describe the Cretans.
4. Explain the phrase, "To the pure all things are pure."
5. How are these words frequently misapplied?

TITUS 2-3 — CONCERNING CHURCH MEMBERS

Paul now enters upon instructions to Titus as in the case of Timothy concerning different classes in the church. Aged men are first spoken of, verses 1-2. It is sound doctrine that these be of the character described. Aged women are next referred to (v. 3), and under cover of that exhortation comes an illusion to the younger women (vv. 4-5). Titus does not exhort the young women directly on the themes indicated, but indirectly through the older women. A hint for Christian workers in our own time, and especially in slum districts, where discretion is to be observed between the sexes. The young men come in for treatment next (v. 6), to whom Titus, himself a young man, was to set the right example (vv. 7-8). Then follows an exhortation for servants, where bond-servants or slaves are meant (vv. 9-10). "The duties of these last, and indeed of all classes, are grounded on the moral purpose of God in the Gospel concerning us" (vv. 11, 14). These last-named verses are full of strong meat, and will bear close analysis. See what the Christian's hope is, in verse 13. Observe the two-fold object which Christ had in view in the work of the Cross, verse 14, and the obligation it lays upon believers, verse 12.

Pastors will find a fine outline here for an expository discourse on Four Great Things:

- (1) A great revelation (v. 11);
- (2) A great obligation (v. 12);
- (3) A great inspiration (v. 13); and

(4) A great salvation (v. 14).

All these classes are now put in mind of their obligations with reference to the civil powers, and to outsiders and unbelievers generally (3:1-3); an exhortation affording another opportunity of contrasting the present state and condition of believers with that in which they were prior to their salvation. Here we find a precious declaration of Gospel truth which should be learned by heart (vv. 4, 7). The theme is salvation. How Not was it effected? How was it effected? What period of time? What is the result? The eighth verse might be included as showing the obligation of the saved growing out of their salvation.

Another sermon is suggested here on Salvation from Start to Finish:

- (1)** Our condition by nature (v. 3);
- (2)** Our change from nature to grace (vv. 4-6); and
- (3)** Our condition by grace (vv. 7-8).

Titus was to constantly affirm these things, avoiding other things and subjects that might come up (v. 9). What a lesson for the ministers of our own time? Finally, he is directed how to deal with these false teachers and their followers (vv. 10-11).

The remainder of this chapter is taken up with personal directions and commissions.

QUESTIONS

- 1.** What hint for Christian workers is found in this lesson?
- 2.** Analyze 2:11-14.
- 3.** Analyze 3:3-8.