



HG186 *Paul's Letter To Titus*
Doctrine And Duty In The World

Titus 3:1-15

Home Group Study Notes

23 June 2019 - Revd Paul A. Carr



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group
with you, along with any previous notes and other
resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

You've been exiled to a deserted island for a year. You may take one piece of music, one book (not a Bible) and one luxury item you can carry with you (not a boat to leave the island!). What would you take and why?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



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Home Group Sermon

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Introduction

We come to the end of our series on Titus - it's been a bit of a 'short, sharp, shock' of a book hasn't it? With so much to teach us about Christian living. Paul is sharing principles that would enable Titus to nurture and disciple those new Christians on Crete. He sets out Titus' task in 1:6: ... *appoint elders ... blameless ... of sound doctrine ... able to rebuke and teach*. In 2:1, Titus: ... *must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine, for the building up of the church*. Titus is given a twofold instruction in 2:15 to: *Encourage and rebuke with all authority*. He is to use sound doctrine to discourage and root out heresy and false teaching. There are a few more lessons Paul wants to teach as chapter 3 draws Paul's instructions to Titus to a close.

1. Law Or Grace?

One of the ongoing debates of the early church was of the division between OT Law and NT Grace. Is Grace above the Law? Does being saved by Grace mean that I can live a life without rules and regulations? In 3:1, Paul encourages Titus to: *Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient*. The Cretans had an insubordinate characteristic (1:12&16). Paul writes to remind Titus that the people that they have a duty and responsibility to uphold the law - even if they don't agree with it!

It's not always easy to be subjective to those we have no respect for. However, in being subjective to authority we are actually honouring God. Remember Jesus' words in Matthew 22:21: ... *give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's*. We still have to pay our road tax, community charges, VAT, observe speed limits etc. We may be saved by Grace, but we are still accountable to the Law! Paul's letter to the Roman's sets out exactly what our attitude should be to ensure an orderly, disciplined and functioning society 13:1-7: *Everyone must subject themselves to the governing authorities ... which God has established ... give everyone what you owe ... revenue ... taxes ... respect ... honour*. In 1 Peter 2:13 we are to: ... *submit ourselves for the Lord's sake*. Our first loyalty is to God. I believe we are to challenge, where appropriate, the morals behind laws we are given and to voice disagreement when necessary. It's a challenge for us to give allegiance to the state - this is what caused the martyrdom of so many of the early Christians. How do we walk the fine line between submitting to the teachings of scripture and belonging to a church that is inextricably linked to the state and where acts of parliament are assimilated into our doctrine/practise?

2. Contributors Not Consumers

The suggestion here, in Titus 3, is that we are to be contributors not consumers. That is, we are to give something to society instead of taking out. Involvement in community affairs, perhaps, or local government, even politics. God needs and wants Christians in all areas of society.

3:1: ... *be obedient, and ready to do whatever is good*. We often talk about Christians serving the common good don't we? It isn't enough for Christians to be law-abiding; we are to be public spirited as well. And in the anti-authoritarian, anti-establishment, post-modern world in which we live it is, I believe, an opportunity for the church to set a good example!

In 3:2 Paul reminds Titus that the mark of a true believer in the community is: *To slander no-one, to be peaceable, and considerate, and to show true humility towards all men.* How many of us can say we are that way inclined? I'm sure we can all remember times when we have failed to live up to God's expectations. We've talked behind someone's back, we've been arrogant, argumentative, quarrelsome, hot-headed, insensitive, intolerant - that's me all over!

3. Live Godly Lives

The Cretans had a reputation for being a rebellious people. In 1:16, we read that the heresy of the Cretans was that: ... they claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. If the early Christians had been no different to them, what impact would their witness have had on the society around them? In the same way, if we have no integrity in our witness, we give the impression that we are only paying lip service to God with our intellect and not serving him with our heart.

3:3 reminds us that, we too, were once: ... *foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures.* That's a fair description of who I was before I became a Christian. It's sometimes easy to look down on non-Christians because of the way they live their lives. But we can't expect non-Christians to live by God's standards if they don't know him. It's also easy to forget exactly how we lived prior to Jesus entering our heart and lives. Perhaps it's worth remembering that we too, at one time were, as Paul writes in Ephesians 2:12: ... *separate from Christ ... foreigners to the promise ... without hope and without God in the world.* Did we change our heart of our own accord? No, of course not. This change came about through supernatural intervention, when God, through His grace entered our lives. As Paul puts it in vs4-7: ... *when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things that we had done, but because of His mercy.*

4. Devotion To Doing Good

The recurring theme in Titus is one of doing good. 3:8: ... *I want to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.* It was obviously a great concern of Paul's, that Titus would grasp fully exactly what he was writing to him. How can we show the world around us that God has saved us, changed us and enhanced our lives? The old saying actions speak louder than words is so true. Sound doctrine equals changed behaviour and a changed lifestyle and is the chief means by which we witness for Jesus. As Paul suggests in 2:10, it is about: ... making the teaching about God our Saviour attractive.

How do we show good works in our lives today? Think for a moment about what you could do this week, to show something of the love of Jesus in you, to your neighbour or colleague - something practical perhaps? I don't wish to be condescending, but even talking to someone that everyone else ignores, or doing someone a favour, or taking time out to visit someone, can all have a positive impact on a person's life. I'm reminded of that well-known prayer of Teresa of Avila:

*Christ has no body now on earth but yours;
Yours are the only hands, with which he can do his work,
Yours are the only feet, with which he can go about the world,
Yours are the only eyes through which his compassion
Can shine forth upon a troubled world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

Why not make a determined effort this week to do something for a non-Christian! It will cost in time and effort - even money. It's easy to do things for others in the church community - they are our brothers and sisters in Christ - but it's so much more difficult to serve those with whom we have nothing in common. However, as vs8 reminds us, you'll actually get something in return: *These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.*

5. To Rebuke Or Not To Rebuke

So far in this chapter, Paul has reminded the Cretans, and us, to be conscientious citizens and to live consistent Christian lives.

But, in vs9-11, Paul reverts back how to on how to deal with false teachers. And it's one of rebuke and discipline: *Avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law. Why? Because these are unprofitable and useless.* Eugene Peterson puts it this way in *The Message: Stay away from mindless, pointless quarrelling ... it gets you nowhere.*

I don't believe Paul is advocating the exclusion of theological disagreement. There is a place for the questioning Christian. Much of it can be interesting, exciting and challenging. Indeed, both Jesus and Paul could be said to be controversial figures in their own way! Paul is talking about foolish controversy, when we allow insignificant issues to become the all-important focus: when we take our eyes off the Lord; when we become pharisaical in our attitude rather than allowing the grace of God to direct our thoughts, words and actions. 1 Corinthians 1:10: *I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.*

In 1:10-16, we see something of the division caused by their arguments and quarrels, Whole households were being ruined by people: teaching things they ought not to teach. We often presume that Paul must be writing about false teachers and those who were seeking to undermine the Gospel. However, Paul is referring to those who cause divisions in the church from within. The original meaning of the word for a divisive, factious person describes someone who promotes divisions by propagating extreme views of legitimate Christian truths. A person whose self-willed opinion is a substitute for submission to scriptural truth, which leads to division.

Or, as 2 Peter 2:1 suggests: ... *those who have followed their own ways and bring the way of truth into disrepute.* We don't want to be confused with the modern interpretation of the word heretic as being one who holds false doctrine. Paul is writing about someone who has extreme views of legitimate Christian truths. Extremities of emphasis will always be misplaced. We need to be balanced Christians of Word and Spirit. Only then, can we truly guard ourselves against extremism. One of the consequences of people holding extreme views, is that they so easily become sub-Christian - a few examples of this could be the debates in the CofE (and other denominations) around same sex marriage, LGBTQIA+ and transgenderism. The Oxford Diocese are currently looking to appoint LGBTQIA+ chaplain. So many people, such as our own Bishops, see it as a pastoral issue when it's actually much more of a theological issue. Sub-Christian extreme views were certainly the case when Paul was writing to Titus. He refers, 1:7 to: Those who are self-seeking, self-willed. Those who are full of: ... selfish ambition and vain conceit. (Phil 2:3) Those who are self-centred rather than Christ centred.

Paul writes in Romans 16:17-18: *...watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the minds of naive people.* It was the role of the Apostles to discourage and root out heresy and false teaching - we are involved in a spiritual battle and confrontation of this kind cannot be avoided - that is something that Paul is confirming here. In a similar way, we need never be afraid to take necessary, effective, preventative measures to safeguard the weaker members of our community, congregation, or indeed, the welfare of an entire church, which is why:

6. Discipline Is Necessary

Discipline is not something the church does particularly well. We see it as being unchristian, uncaring, and unloving but in doing so, we allow divisive attitudes and actions to continue unchallenged. When someone is divisive, we ignore them, hoping that the problem will go away, or we simply put up with their divisiveness to the detriment of the church. Parents discipline their children because they love them and want them to know, and learn from, what they've done wrong - not because they enjoy it! Discipline is a necessary function if we have someone's wellbeing at heart. How much more when it is discipline instigated by a loving heavenly Father? I don't believe that discipline is something that should be looked upon as a futile last resort, but rather, as a positive, productive step in the management of difficult circumstances.

Discipline is to be administered in three stages. 3:10 urges us to: *Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.* Only then, when the person refuses the opportunity of repentance and restoration, are they to be rejected. It could mean public chastisement, exclusion from church membership, or even excommunication. As Paul suggests in 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 we are: ... *not to associate with them in order that they may feel ashamed. Yet we are not to regard them as enemies but warn them as brothers.*

Discipline must always be administered in a loving, caring way combined with a desire for healing and restoration. We are called to be supportive people not destructive people. John Stott sums it up when he suggests that: *All disciplinary action is to exhibit the love and justice of the cross. We are committed to a Gospel of reconciliation and as such we are to gently instruct such people (Galatians 6:1-2). In the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will (2 Timothy 2:25-6).*

However painful discipline may be to implement, the fate of such people is not our responsibility as vs11 informs us: You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned. By persisting in divisiveness, they separate themselves from God and by refusing to heed the warnings given they suffer the self-inflicted consequences. It would appear the people Paul was referring to were causing others to fall away from, even reject, Jesus. I believe that nothing must be allowed to hinder the furtherance of the Gospel message, whether from outside the church or, more importantly, from within.

Conclusion

In vs14 Paul reiterates his main concerns for the church on Crete: *Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives.* Notice the words learn to devote. It's not something that comes easily or naturally - it has to be worked at. It's to be an ongoing lifestyle, something that we put into practice on a daily basis - the application of sound doctrine will always make this possible! I say possible because, listening to and agreeing with the fundamentals of our faith isn't enough and being full of good intentions isn't enough - we need to put it into practise.

We are not to live, vs14: ... unproductive lives, both in the spiritual sense and in what we offer to the society in which we live. I have a poster in my: *You can talk the talk, but can you walk the walk?* We must learn to walk, talk, live, teach and pray the Gospel, by devoting ourselves to, and trusting in, God.

Perhaps that is an appropriate thought to finish on, as we reflect on all that we have examined in this study, to be: conscientious citizens; living consistent Christian lives; devoting ourselves to good works through having our faith firmly rooted in sound doctrine.

Emmanuel Church Text for 2019

*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light,
we have fellowship with one another and the blood
of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.*

1 John 1:7



Looking Upwards (40 mins)

Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1. Why isn't it enough for Christians simply to be law abiding? What else is involved in our relationship with the state authorities? How might this work out in practise for you?

2. How do we walk the fine line between submitting to the teachings of scripture and belonging to a church that is inextricably linked to the state and where acts of parliament are assimilated into our doctrine and practise?

3. How might Christians be guilty of following extreme views that so easily become sub-Christian? Can you give some examples?

4. Can you give some examples of what might be considered pointless quarrelling? What can be done to avoid these?

5. How do you respond to division? Have you ever come across anyone who could be described as a 'divisive person' in the church community? What did you tend to do about such people?

6. The book of Titus has been a short but challenging book in many different ways. What, out of all that we have studied through this series, really sticks in your mind? What has strengthened your faith the most? What has challenged your faith the most? What has inspired your faith the most?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Inwards (15 mins) Caring For Each Other

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) Concern For Others

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

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