

56. Jesus in Titus

March 15, 2018

What do John 3:17, former San Francisco 49ers' Quarterback Steve Young, and the Book of Titus have in common? They are all good, but never recognized as good ones because of the one before them. For John 3:17, it was that famous John 3:16; for Steve Young, it was Joe Montana; for the Book of Titus, it was 2 Timothy.

Overshadowed by the more popular letters of 1 and 2 Timothy, this 'pastoral letter' seems obscure and even unimportant to some. What a shame! Equally essential and inspired by God, the letter to Titus brings needed balance to the subject of the pastoral care of churches.

Paul's first letter to Timothy emphasizes doctrine. His second letter to Timothy provides a strong emotional appeal as his swan song at the end of his life. And Paul's letter to Titus brings a word of caution, a reminder that good deeds are to accompany our proclamation of truth and our defense of the Gospel.

The two letters to Timothy tell God's servant to protect and to preach the Gospel, while the letter to Titus tells God's servant to practice the Gospel.

A. THE AUTHOR AND THE TIMELINE

Titus 1:1 Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness

Paul wrote his letter to Titus from Nicopolis in AD 63, after the apostle's release from his first Roman imprisonment. Upon leaving Timothy in Ephesus to minister there, Paul accompanied Titus to the island of Crete, where he intended Titus to lead and organize the island's churches in their early years of existence.

What do we know about Titus? Not much. He was known as Paul's true son in our common faith according to chapter 1 verse 4. He was a Greek who had been converted through Paul's ministry and became his close friend. He was one of the men with whom Paul traveled on difficult journeys. With Titus at his side, Paul once chastised Peter for his hypocrisy. Yes, Titus got to witness that confrontation between Peter and Paul firsthand.

Titus was a gifted man who apparently had strength of character and great resourcefulness – someone with enough integrity to be left on the Crete Island to take care of congregation bickerings with the truth of God.

This church on the island of Crete was facing the challenge of staying true to the Gospel in a chaotic environment. So when Paul wrote to Titus, he offered him instructions help him lead this group of believers on Crete. You can understand Titus' loneliness and discouragement. And you can understand his need for advice. The aging apostle was quick to offer both encouragement and counsel to the young protegee.

B. THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

To give Titus guidance in appointing church elders and facing opposition, instructions about good conduct, and warnings about false teachers.

The churches on the island Crete needed qualified leaders. One group of false teachers was trying to mix Jewish law with the Gospel of grace, while some of the Gentile believers were abusing the message of grace and turning it into a license to sin. It would have been easy for Titus to have "heard God's call to go elsewhere," but he stuck it out and finished his work.

As he described the qualifications for church leaders, Paul reminded Titus the proper perspective for any church leader:

Titus 2:13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ

Besides being one of the strongest declarations of the deity of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, this verse also reminds us to keep our eye on the sky, waiting for the Rapture of the church and living our lives knowing that Jesus could come back at any time.

Paul really packed some precious jewels into this short Book, and it should be read often by every Christian and especially by every church pastor.

C. THE LESSONS FROM TITUS

We can find three significant lessons from the letter to Titus, one from each chapter.

1) Some choose to be disqualified

Titus 1:16 They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

Doesn't this sound like what is happening in America now? The majority of people in the U.S.A. claims that they know God or they are Christians, but the way they live is anything but God's way. They profess to know God, but in works and lives they deny Him. Talk is cheap.

Religious ceremonies and rituals do not and cannot change the evil heart of man. Only the Word of God can change the human heart. When the heart is changed, the life will reveal the change. Apostle Paul and James were never in disagreement – they both said that faith without works is dead. Saving faith produces a godly life. As John Calvin said, "Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone."

The word 'disqualified' used in here is the same word from 1 Corinthians 9:26-27.

1 Corinthians 9:26-27 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

The Greek for 'disqualify' is 'adokimos'. In my opinion, this is one of the most frightening words for any Christian leaders, even lay people. Because by our own choice, we make ourselves 'DISQUALIFY' from the race we are running toward the goal of the glory of God.

Ah yes, there are many obstacles, temptations, distractions, and brutal enemy forces waiting for us in our course. But none of that makes us to be disqualified, but ourselves. Once we start to compromise and start to deny the holy living we need to keep, we are starting an erosion.

I like what D.L. Moody said: "I have more trouble with D.L. Moody than with any other man I've ever met." We all have a satan's snitch in us, a.k.a. the old sinful nature, as long as we live on this earth.

2) Saved by grace alone

Titus 2:11-15 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. 15 Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.

Mercy is the compassion of God that prompted Him to send a Savior to mankind. It wouldn't have been necessary for Christ to die, the cross would have been circumvented.

God loved men, but He didn't save us by His love. Love is the divine motive, but God is not only love, He is righteous and holy and just. The holy demands of God and His righteous standard had to be met. The love of God may long to save us, but the immutable law of justice makes love powerless to do so. Therefore, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus for our sins met the holy demands of God's justice, and He can now save us by grace.

Grace is not complicated or implicated with human effort. God doesn't ask our cooperation. He doesn't ask for our good conduct or our strong character in order to save us. God only asks men to believe Him, to trust Him and to accept Christ. God's way is the best way, and it is the only way.

The Gospel does not appeal to Christ-rejecting men to do better. When a person says, "I am going to try to do better without Christ," he is a liar. If he rejects Jesus Christ, he might as well try to get all he can out of this life, because this life is all that he is going to get. God is not trying to reform this world. He is redeeming men who accept Christ.

Grace teaches us to expect and prepare for our blessed hope. That hope is not heaven or glory, but Jesus Himself, face to face, closer than ever.

Here again in v13 plainly and clearly apostle Paul through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit declares that Jesus Christ is not only the Savior of the world, but also He is the very God.

God's messengers are to remember that they are messengers from the King of kings, holding the word that brings life and turns back hell. We need to declare with all the authority from heaven and confidence.

To speak God's message with all authority, we have to back it up with our lives.

3) Mercy, Regeneration, Justification, and Grace of God

Titus 3:4-8 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 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, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.

The more I read the letters from the apostle Paul, the more I realize that this guy can write. He jam-packs mercy, love, the deity of Jesus Christ, depravity of man, salvation, infilling of the Holy Spirit, justification, eternal hope, and grace of God in one sentence from v4-7.

Again, we find Paul remind us that our Savior Jesus Christ is God according to v4. And other great verses to remember when you talk to Jehovah's Witness: Titus 1:3 and 2:13.

Justification is the gracious act of God whereby He declares a believing sinner righteous because of the finished work of Christ on the cross. God puts to our account the righteousness of His Son, so that we can be condemned no more. Not only does He forgive our sins, but He forgets that we were even sinners.

What is the result of this kindness, love, mercy, and grace? Hope! We are heirs of God! This means that today we can draw on His riches. And when He comes, we will share His wealth and His kingdom forever. This hope ties in with Titus 2:13: "*Looking for that blessed hope.*" What a deal we get from our God!

In v5, we see '*the washing of regeneration*'. Those who believe in 'Baptismal Regeneration' use this verse to support their out-of-context theology. The ancient Greek word translated 'washing' here is connected with the spiritual cleansing of the believer by the Word of God through faith.

Ephesians 5:26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

D. APPLICATIONS

- 1) We can choose what we want to believe, but we cannot change the consequences after we die.
- 2) When Christians don't live in a biblical, godly manner, it means that the word of God may be blasphemed among the ungodly.