

Titus

1. Practicing what we preach

8/31/2006

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 put into practice the Gospel.

A. INTRODUCTION OF THE BOOK OF TITUS

1) **Author:** It is rather obvious – Apostle Paul.

2) **Date:** A.D. 62-65

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

4) **Situation:** While Timothy was laboring in metropolitan Ephesus, Titus had his hands full on the island of Crete. Apparently Titus had been won to Christ through Paul's personal ministry as Timothy had been.

But the people on the island of Crete were not the easiest to work with, and Titus became somewhat discouraged. Like Timothy, he was probably a young man. But unlike Timothy, he was not given to timidity and physical ailments.

The churches on the island Crete needed qualified leaders, and the various groups in the churches needed shepherding. 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 leader or pastor.

B. A GREETING FROM APOSTLE PAUL

Titus 1:1-3 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, 2 in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, 3 but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior;

In his usual writing fashion, apostle Paul opens his letter with a greeting. He calls himself as a bondservant and an apostle of Jesus Christ.

The Greek word for 'bondservant' is 'doulos' which means he is a slave who chooses to remain as a slave for his master for the rest of his life according to Deut 15:16-18. In other words, Paul is a slave of Jesus by choice, but he had a high place, because He was a bondservant of God. It is never a low thing to be a servant of a great God.

At the same time, Paul is wearing another hat – an apostle of Jesus Christ with full authority to tell the church what needs to be done.

"God's elect" are those whom He chose from before the foundation of the world to receive His salvation. We can identify God's elect because they respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and live their lives after that Gospel.

All of God's truth is truth, but not all truth is really relevant to godliness. Much of science or geography may be true and admirable – but it won't save a soul from Hell. It is not the truth which accords with godliness.

The truth of the Gospel changes a life from ungodliness to holy living. Sad to say, there were people in the churches on Crete, like many carnal Christians today, who professed to be saved, but whose lives denied their faith.

Yes, there are a couple things God cannot do even though nothing is impossible with Him. He can not sin, nor He can lie. Because it is against His nature and He is holy and righteous.

Titus 1:4 To Titus, a true son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.

This letter bears the name of the man who received it: "Titus, a true son in our common faith". Titus was a Greek who had been converted through Paul's ministry and became his close friend. He was also one of the men with whom Paul traveled on difficult journeys.

C. THE QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

Titus 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--
The island of Crete is one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea. There was a great deal of mythology and tradition. The main cities were Knossos, Cydonia, and Gortyna, and apparently there were churches now in all these places. Paul seems to have done a very effective missionary work on the island, but we have no record of it in Scripture whatsoever.

The 'elders' mentioned here in Titus are different than 'bishop' mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:2. The Greek word for 'elders' is 'presbyteros' and 'bishop' is 'episkopos'. Episkopos is a teaching elder which means pastor. 'Presbyteros' is a regular elders.

Here in Calvary Chapel of Sahuarita as well as other Calvary Chapels, we believe that God's model for the church government is that the pastor is ruled by the Lord and aided by the elders to discover the mind and will of Jesus Christ for His church.

We don't believe in 'Congregationalists' style government which means a majority of votes decides church policies. Since when God went by majority votes or committee's decision? Never.

Someone might ask, "Isn't that what the apostles did?" Yes, they goofed up on that one. They decided that they should replace the position that Judas left. So they cast their lots in Acts 1:26. But guess who became a real apostle? The one who persecuted them – Saul of Tarsus who became Paul. God never goes by human's votes. If that is the case, we human would have replace God with someone who would do what we want long ago and replace him, too.

Acts 1:26 And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Some people have a concern, "What about accountability of the pastor in Calvary Chapel?" In our church we have a ruling elders which is the Board of Directors and elder. A ruling elders are myself, Pastor Chuck Kelly from Calvary Chapel Bullhead City, Pastor Ernest Finklea from Calvary Chapel Durango and Pastor Robert Furrow from Calvary Tucson. The elder of our church is Assistant Pastor Jack Laverty.

I am planning to add one more person who would meet the qualification we are going to study in v6-9, to the elder position by the end of this year. Eventually, we are going to have the local people in the board.

I am accountable to these Board of Directors. If I need to spend more than \$1,000, I need to get an approval from the Board of Directors. When I make a major decision, I consult and get an approval from them. I talk with them regularly and let them know that what is going on in our church.

In v5, these elders were not chosen by popular vote, and they were not chosen through their own self-promotion. It was Titus' job to look for men of the kind of character Paul would describe in the following passage and to appoint them as elders in congregations. This means Paul delegated a lot of authority to Titus.

The qualifications for leadership in the following passage have nothing to do with gifts, nor wealth, nor social status. Developing character takes time and a real relationship with Jesus Christ.

Titus 1:6-9 if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, 8 but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

1) A man is blameless

That does not mean he must be perfect, without sin. It does mean that any accusation that is brought against him must not be found to be true. His life must be above reproach.

2) One-woman man

It does not mean that a leader must be married. If that were the case, then both Jesus and Paul would be disqualified from leadership. Nor is it the idea that a leader could never remarry if his wife had passed away or if he were Biblically divorced. The idea is that the leader has his focus upon one woman – that being his wife.

Just like the qualification of the Pastor mentioned in 1 Timothy 3, the elder must a man, not woman according to the Bible. I know that there are many denominations go for women pastors and women elders. Is it biblical? No. Are we going to do that? Over my dead body. I don't set the rule. God does. I just follow.

3) Having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination

The children in an elder's home must not only be saved, but must be good examples of obedience and dedication. This applies, of course, to children still at home, under the authority of their father.

4) Steward of God

A steward does not own but manages all that his master puts into his hands. The most important characteristic of a steward is faithfulness and integrity. He must use what his master gives him for the good and glory of his master, and not for himself personally.

5) Not self-willed

Basically selfish people are disqualified from leadership. They show their self-willed nature in arrogance, stubbornness and a proud self-focus.

6) Not quick-tempered

The elder must know how to control his anger. Anger itself is not sin, but outburst of anger is.

7) Not given to wine

I know that we have liberty in Christ to drink or not to drink alcohol. But I don't see any reason why Christians should drink. I've heard many reasons why they drink or have to drink. But the bottom line is that it is their desire to drink. But would having a glass of wine or beer or a shot of whiskey while you talk about Jesus to non-believer be convincing to them? For the sake of the testimony of Christ, Christians should not drink.

8) Not violent

Obviously, a person with violent attitude brings disgrace to the name of God.

9) Not greedy for money

Covetousness and greed come from selfishness. A person with selfishness cannot be an elder of a church, because he would think about himself before God or others.

This brings another point. A person who doesn't believe in trusting God through tithe and offering also disqualify himself from the elder's position. Because he is greedy.

10) Hospitable, a lover of what is good

11) Sober-minded

This describes the person who is able to think clearly and with clarity. They are not constant joke-makers, but know how to deal with serious subjects in a serious way.

12) Just, holy, self-controlled

An elder of the church must be just – right toward men, holy – right towards God, self-controlled – right towards himself.

13) Holding fast to the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict

When he brings the word of God to people he must bring it with confidence and authority from Christ, not mixed with theological speculation and academic doubts.

Through the knowledge and faith in the Word of God, an elder must be able to encourage those who are on the right track and to convict those who are on the wrong track. In other words, elders should be able to teach the Word.

D. APPLICATION

Let's try to meet the elder's qualification whether you are a man or woman. It is a high standard, but it is a good goal for all of us to strive after.