

Women's Bible Study: The book of Titus Titus Chapter 3

Read:

- The text of Titus can be found in a printable version with wide margins suitable for note taking on the website.
- Go back and read chapter 3 in detail this week noting anything you underlined or circled last week, and/or emphasizing new words or phrases that stand out to you.
- List out any themes you see or questions you have.

Verse 1-3 Questions:

1. Who is the 'them' in verse 1?
2. What is the first direction given to 'them' and how does it tie into the larger theme of the letter so far?
3. The rest of the list in verse 1 is easy to read, but hard to do. Which of the instructions in verse 1b and 2 do you struggle with the most?
4. How would the different sub-groups within the household each have different challenges with these instructions?
5. Verse 3 provides the 'why' to verses 1-2, but it also implies what the lifestyle was like Crete among non-believers. It sounded pretty ugly didn't it? But if you read it honestly, you probably resonate with one (or many) of these darker traits. Which one is easier for you to slide back into? How can that help you as an early indicator that you are stepping out of line with the Spirit led life of faith and grace in Jesus?

Verse 1-3 Commentary:

- Chapter 3 is addressed as a charge to Titus with respect to the church as it, as a body, relates to 'all people' — namely the cultural Cretans. Paul had already written about each person's role within the household, and was next segueing into the overall way they lived out their lives as a community to showcase their faith to the culture.
- There are times and places to be dogmatic and bold, but in this section Paul was encouraging the church to attempt to get along with their neighbors even if they disagreed about the faith.

- This is a timely word of encouragement for us in our current cultural context where often as Christians we feel torn between ‘holding the line’ or defending the faith at all costs, and integrating into our workplaces and communities as peers and friends. The key word (to me) in this exhortation from Paul is to be ‘gentle’ with perfect courtesy.
- How often are we as Christians gentle? Or how often are we instead strident and shrill? What does perfect courtesy look like in your interactions with non-believers? At work? With family etc.
- Paul reminded them that they could be gentle because they used to live lives that were foolish themselves (and will go further in the next verse).

Verse 4-8

1. These four verses are a short overview of the entire gospel. First of all what is the reason for our entire life and faith? What is the reason God saves us as stated in verse 4? (And the implied reason these Christians could be gentle with their pagan neighbors?)
2. Verse 5 drives home this point again, what role do our works have in our salvation?
3. Depending on your translation, your text may use the word regeneration or the words ‘rebirth’ etc. In both versions, rebirth and renewal are done by whom?
4. If you are not a person who often thinks about the role of the Holy Spirit in your salvation, pause for a moment and reflect on this: the work is done by Jesus but verse 6 shows us that then Jesus pours out the Spirit and it is the Spirit who renews us and gives us new life. What does the word ‘washing’ make you think of within the context of the church?
5. Finally in verse 7 we see two new words that we have not come across yet in this particular Pauline letter, what are they?
6. What do you think of when you think of justification? Do you understand it, or is it just one of those big Bible words that you skip over? We’ll dig into it further in the commentary, but jot down your immediate thoughts with respect to ‘justification’ in this context.

7. What do you think of with respect to the word 'heir'? Same as above, jot down your initial thoughts especially if this is a new concept to you.
8. Verse 8 is referring to the gospel laid out in verses in 4-7 and Paul again is making a bold claim and directive that Titus was to insist on the gospel truth. But what comes next is interesting, what did Paul say would follow?
9. After just making a clear gospel statement that our salvation is not about works, why then did Paul say good works were so important? Is this a contradiction? We touched on this in chapter 2 but how do works follow the gospel message?

Verses 4-8 Commentary:

- In verses 1-3 we looked at how the Cretan Christians were called to interact with their society in a gentle way and to not be quarrelsome. Paul began to explain that this was because they had once been no different, but the real reason builds up to the gospel presentation in verses 4-7.
- The entire reason they (and we) could manage to be part of their local culture without being quarrelsome was because of the difference that the grace of Jesus made in their lives.
- Their self worth and self value wasn't based on winning an argument, or pointing out all the areas their neighbors were wrong, rather it was based on the identity SOLELY provided by the work of Jesus which led to the renewal of people through the Holy Spirit.
- The word washing may remind us of baptism which is the outward sign of a spiritual reality, namely, in Christ we are reborn as new people, with new identities that do not need to 'win' against culture, rather we are to gently love our neighbors and win them to the gospel that way; trusting God to do the work of actually changing their hearts (like he changed our hearts).
- The word justified, is a legal term that Paul used quite a lot in his other letters to refer to our status as we stand before God. We know that we are sinners, that without God we'd be inclined to live like the families on Crete described in vs. 3.
- Justification gives us legal status that says we have the right to stand without the guilt of sin, before God. This is possible because Christ has taken the guilt upon himself. When God sees us, he is seeing us through

the lens, so to speak, of Jesus. This has nothing to do with us and therefore is only through grace - a free gift.

- BUT this legal status of being justified, or to put it in spiritual terms of being righteous before God, is what also qualifies us to be heirs in the courtroom of the king, heirs to the throne, heirs of the one true God and his family.
- Romans 8:14-17 is another passage where Paul expounds on this key component to our faith. Read these verses carefully to see the relationship between the Spirit and our faith and our new status as heirs:
 - Romans 8:14-17 *“For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”*

Verses 9 -11 Questions:

1. Paul again gives a contrast in behaviors similar to verse 3. Do you notice a theme in the behaviors listed? (**I’ll get to the genealogy part below, it’s not how we understand genealogies today!). How have you seen in your own life divisions/quarreling/and foolish controversies bring down groups? How have you participated? Why do you think Paul was emphasizing those particular behaviors?
2. Paul referenced specifically ‘quarreling about the law’ in verse 9, this may be a nod again to the Jewish contingent who wanted to promote adherence to the Old Testament Jewish law (such a getting circumcised). But in what ways do churches today easily find themselves ‘quarreling about the law’? What are some modern examples of this?
3. Paul used some very strong language with respect to people who cause division (and this is within the church context). Keeping in mind Paul’s over all objective to have the church interact with society and ‘adorn the gospel’ why do you think he instructed Titus to cast out the person who caused division after warning them?

Verse 9-11 Commentary:

- Paul had no tolerance for the church falling in on itself and fighting over matters. He was trying to set the church up to be a place that outsiders will be attracted to, and see as different. His tone was strong here because Paul knew that it only took one or two people to divide the whole new church he and Titus had planted.
- Paul's mention of genealogies may strike us as odd, and does not mean those of you who love historical research into your family trees should stop. Commentators think this had something to do with the Jewish leaders trying to use their history and family trees (which would have been extensive and elaborate beyond the few genealogies listed in the Bible) to prove various points about heritage or membership into different sub-sects that naturally would create more division - almost like a litmus test or a "you're in, you're out" thing that would tie back into an emphasis on Old Testament law etc.
- The point was, it didn't matter who you were, or what family you came from, the grace of Jesus was for all people and Paul was encouraging Titus to make sure the Christian gentiles of Crete were confident in their salvation and status.
- The sin of verse 10 is so severe Paul commanded the church to essentially remove them from the body of believers. We sometimes think of 'big sins' like say murder or adultery etc, how often do you think about stirring up division? This is not to say there isn't a place for respectful disagreement or discussion, but it is to say creating and causing controversy is up there among the very toxic things that can completely ruin a church from the inside out. It is totally antithetical to the church existing as one united body that attracts those around them to the gospel.

Verses 12-15 Questions

1. While the postscript to letters are often overlooked, they are equally part of our Scripture. In what ways do we understand the nature of Paul's mission work better through these small personal details? (There is no trick question here - it's just worth thinking about).
2. How does the book of Titus end? What are the last words? Go back to chapter 1 and Paul's opening? How does the end mirror the beginning?

3. Therefore given the start and finish, if you had to choose one word to sum up Paul's understanding of the gospel, what would it be?

Verse 12-15 commentary:

- Paul mentioned four different people in the postscript, two are mentioned elsewhere in New Testament (Tychicus and Apollos) and two are only mentioned here, (Artemas and Zenas). What's interesting about this section is that we see Titus was sent to get the church into good shape, and then Paul expected him to move on and rejoin him. Not every church leader was meant to stay, and Paul is encouraging a model of 'replacement leadership' which is useful to think about today.
- When we allow a church to become too tightly tied to the identity of one person it can be at the expense of the real Leader which is Jesus. It's encouraging to see that even Titus was to be replaced and the church was to run on the gospel principles with these other people... some of whom we only hear about one time.
- We all eventually will be replaced and as Christians it's important to remember that in our jobs and lives, in our homes or in our communities, the point is always to be pointing people to Jesus who remains the same even when we move on.
- Finally, this letter to Titus ends with grace just as it started - Paul's letters are full of grace even when they feel blunt or possibly harsh.
- Do not miss this: the letter to Titus is about teaching this new church to live in a world where there was corruption and a society that did what it wanted. Whatever made people happy (slaves to passions and pleasures) was the rule of the day.
- The response to that sort of cultural trend is not to lock everyone down with tons of rules and regulations (that's what the Judiazers were promoting under the Old Testament law). That would only incite the cultural Cretans more.
- The response is to show them what real freedom is.
- Real freedom in life comes only when we understand that Jesus alone is our hope and salvation and He has already done the works needs to accomplish this.
- Real freedom comes not by being slaves to our passions and pleasures but by being slaves to Christ - ironically being servants of Christ is what freedom is, and it's only possible by grace.
- In our world today we are surrounded by a culture that also says anything goes, whatever makes you happy is good and right, the answers are deep within you.

- And our response should not be to respond with rules and wagging fingers, but rather with a life that shows what true freedom is. A life that will be attractive to households/families and our community at large, a life full of grace and the faith that we can be sure of.