

Women's Bible Study: The book of Titus. Chapter 1

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 1 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.

Verses 1-4 questions:

1. What can we learn just from the introduction about Paul? List out some terms or words that he uses to describe himself.
2. What can we learn just from the introduction about God? List out some word or phrases that Paul uses to describe God in these verses.
3. In your lists for Paul and God what are the contrasts?
4. Those of you who know your ancient history, do you recall who in the pantheon of Greek gods was said to have been born on Crete? (The answer is next if you want to think about it for a second!)
5. In verse 4 Paul commends grace and peace to Titus (and mercy if you are reading the King James, it has a slightly different original text it uses and so you get a third quality!). What are the subtle differences

Verses 1-4 commentary:

- These verses are Paul's customary way of introducing his letters, but this is a particularly long one even for Paul (it's the third longest).
- The word 'servant' is the same word used for bondservant or even slave, (the slave system was different in ancient times than during American slavery, but it was still very real). The term apostle is one given by God - it's a position of authority over other people, but *under* authority to God.
- On the other hand the words used to describe God include the idea that God is before or outside of time, capable of giving eternal life, capable of saving and incapable of what . . . ?

- It was Zeus, as a result Crete was an important part of the ancient Greek (and later Roman) mythology. But what do we know about Zeus and the pantheon of gods? They lie and deceive and trick at almost every turn.
- When Paul declared that God does not lie right in his introduction, he is saying this God, the one true God, is different than even the greatest Greek god, this God is worth following. Furthermore, this God is not under any other authority, and in fact is outside of the created world altogether (unlike the pantheon of gods who always are part of it).

Verse 5-9 questions:

- Read through these verses and note anything that stands out to you. It's a job description for the leaders of the church, specifically what we call elders in our church (overseers, elders and even the word bishop are all ways we translate the same greek word 'prebyteros' for this position here).
1. vs. 5 uses the phrase 'put into order' the greek word behind that is related to our word for orthotics or orthopedic. What do those words make you think about? (besides heart stopping orthodontist bills!).
 2. How then does this help you understand why Paul may now be telling Titus about the roles of church leadership? What do you think the context was for these instructions?
 3. Do any of the qualifications for an elder stand out to you in verses 6-9? It's a pretty high bar. Especially when the actions of the whole family come into play. Why do you think Paul includes the whole family as part of the instructions for the church leadership?
 4. vs. 7 uses the phrase 'above reproach' which is a word that tends to have an element of shame attached to it. Any sin would bring shame and reproach to this leader and the family. Any sin! Who can live up to this?? Certainly not any church leaders I know (including myself). How can Paul ask this of the church elders?

Verses 5-9 commentary:

- Paul's comments indicate something in the new churches on Crete was out of line, crooked, something in how they were running and operating

needed to be straightened out like a bone or teeth need to be set and straightened. But anyone who has had that done, knows the straightening process can be both painful and harder than when the process is complete and straight.

- While we know we can not 'make' our families all cooperate or believe what we believe, Paul's instructions here show us the importance of our faith not being only an individual thing (which we tend to over-emphasize in America) but also familial, corporate. When the world looks at us (or looked at the families in Crete) they were comparing them to what their culture said family units could be like (we'll see that in the next verses).
- Rather than being intimidating or overwhelming, this should provide us with a template for our families and remind us that our jobs as family members (whether we are moms or sisters or daughters etc) have eternal value and significance even as we go about our mundane daily tasks. The world is watching and though God calls us to a higher standard, Jesus is the way this standard can be met, so the pressure is off but the hope and truth can remain!

Verses 10-16 questions:

1. The church leaders are to set an example over and against what is happening in Crete among the families and supposed leaders of the society. What is the first descriptive word used in verse 10?
2. Remember the first word Paul used to describe himself back in verse 1. What do you think the paradigm is that he is setting up here?
3. Look just at the second half of verse 10, what stands out to you? If you've studied the book of Galatians with us this will sound familiar. Here, again, are those who claim to be converts but are still insisting that Gentile
4. In verse 11, who are these people upsetting?
5. What value then is Paul placing on the role of the family unit? (Remember this when we get to the 'new family rules' in chapter 2.)
6. Why do you think Paul uses this quote from one of their own local poets in verse 12? How would you feel if someone came in and

quoted one of America's well known poets to demonstrate that our behavior was out of line?

7. We don't know what the 'myths' were in vs. 14 but whatever they were they pulled people away from the truth, and remember they were targeting families. What are some 'myths' our culture tries to convince us of? For example, myths about productivity or education or success or beauty etc. List out 2-3 myths you are more prone to fall prey to if you are not grounded in the truth of the gospel.
8. When we fall prey to the myths of our times they touch every single part of us, vs. 15 says if we go down that road then nothing is pure - our entire self get 'defiled'. How is this true in your life? When you are not grounded in God's word and the gospel, how does a particular myth effect every part of your life?

Verse 10-16 Commentary:

- Some who were claiming to be Christians were following old Jewish laws. See Galatians chapter 2:3, in it Titus is mentioned and Paul explains that Titus does not need to be circumcised.
- So just based on verse 10 we know that Titus is charged to set up a church model that will be in opposition to those who will not place themselves under authority (and Paul explains in vs. 1 that we are ALL under authority, only God, Himself, is not) and are rabble rousing with the old Jewish laws again.
- The gospel is absolutely based on grace alone and not on our works, and yet, if we are followers of Jesus and our works do not match our professed faith, something is deeply wrong. Those who follow Jesus should see a transformation in their lives that will propel them to want to obey God and have works that match their hearts. This is a process to be sure, but Jesus tells us himself in Matthew 12:33ff that a tree is known by its fruit.
- Perhaps you know people who say the right things but their deeds and works do not match. Or perhaps this has been you at some point in your life.
- Vs. 16 sums up this group of false teachers. It's scary. These are people who claim to know God but their actions betray them.
- Good news! There is hope even if you have been a tree producing bad fruit, and Paul will go on to show that.

Final thoughts:

In chapter 1 we see Paul is charging Titus to build up the church in Crete with elders and families who ‘hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught’ (vs. 9) because they are up against a culture that wants to tie them down to old laws and ideas that say they claim will save them instead of the grace of God. It also a culture that is whispering lies and myths and it is enough to upset entire family systems.

This is remarkably like our world today. Consider how you, or your family, or your social structure, has fallen prey to these traps and how God may be instructing you to ‘hold firm’ to His word and truth that Paul opens with, “the hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began.” (vs. 2)

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