

- ***READ Titus 1:1-5*** All throughout his ministry, Paul sought out fellow disciples whom he could equip to be able to be busy about the work of ministry wherever they might be. This was especially true when it came to young men who were fit for the role of being ministers and preachers in the Lord's Churches. Two weeks ago, we considered the first letter that Paul wrote to Timothy concerning his need to make sure that God's household was being built up in a proper manner, and tonight we are going to consider the sister letter that Paul seemingly wrote alongside Timothy's letter to his other *"true son in our common faith,"* Titus.
- Whereas it is believed that Timothy was in Ephesus when he received his letter, Titus finds himself on the island of Crete. Not much is mentioned concerning this Mediterranean island except for there were some in Jerusalem on Pentecost that were from Crete (**Acts 2:11**), and also the fact that Paul was shipwrecked on Crete for a spell during his journey to Rome as a prisoner. (**Acts 27**) It seems that there were some established churches on the island, but we are not told how this came to be. It is supposed that those who were in Jerusalem on Pentecost returned home and planted churches, but others have speculated that Paul would've planted these churches during his ministry that took place during the timeframe of the book of Acts, although that is not recorded for us to know for certain..
- Nevertheless, we are clearly told that Paul left Titus in Crete for the expressed purpose of setting right that which had been left undone. Though there were churches on this island, it seems that they were not fully established as they ought to have been. Therefore, we find the Apostle Paul having left Titus on this island so that he might complete the work that had been previously begun. Paul gets right into the instructions on what was necessary for these churches to be rightly established, and that is what I would like to focus on this evening as we look through what I noticed when I read Paul's letter to Titus.

A Rightly Established Church Includes:

I. Elders who are able to encourage and refute.

1. Ancient writers would often give emphasis to a particular item in a long list of items by either placing it at the front or end of the list and further expanding upon it. While Paul is short with his words concerning the qualities found in **vv.6-8**, he gives much more attention to the need for overseers (elders, shepherds/bishops...another word for the same office, but this word gives the idea of watching over the congregation...**Hebrews 13:17** *"Keep watch over your souls"*) to be well familiar with and able to handle with care the Word of God. They need to be men who are able to *"both encourage with sound teaching and to refute those who contradict it."* (**1:9**)
2. To encourage with sound teaching is to provide the hearer with that which will lead to greater spiritual health. The word *"sound"* was a medical term which gave the idea of something be healthy or whole/complete. Therefore, Paul's admonition is for these overseers to be able to share the word of God in such a way that the hearer would be encouraged to pursue and able to obtain a measure of strong spiritual health.
3. Additionally, the overseers were to have a hold on the Word of God to the degree that they would be able to refute those who contradicted sound teaching. Paul would go on beginning in **v.10** to talk about those of the *"circumcision party"* who were *"rebellious people, full of empty talk, and deception."* It is important to remember that these Cretans that were in Jerusalem for Pentecost were surely Jews, so there were more than likely other Jews who would have stood up against the teachings of the Gospel just as many did back in Jerusalem. Paul states that these people were *"ruining entire households by teaching what they shouldn't in order to get money dishonestly."* This sounds very similar to what we considered last Sunday night in regards to the false teachers who did so simply to gain wealth. (**I Timothy 6:5**) The ploy of these men might have been practicing circumcision for monetary gain. Paul strongly states that these people needed to be silenced before further damage was done. (**1:11**)

4. Paul would even go on to state that even a “prophet” of the Cretans, Epimenides, got it right when he stated that ***“Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons.”*** These men were clearly behaving in this way, and it was necessary for them to be rebuked sharply so that they too might learn to be sound in the faith. Whatever their false teaching centered upon (**vv.15,16** seem to indicate it also might have been the Jewish dietary laws), it was Paul’s contention that they needed to move past those things and stick only to the sound teachings of God’s Word that would lead to legitimate spiritual health.
5. Before moving on to the next point, I’d like to take a moment to make the observation that these words written to Titus only further convince me of the need for those men who are put into the position of elders/overseers/shepherds need to be strong spiritual men and not just men who might be good at balancing a checkbook or group organization. For far too long, the Lord’s churches have fallen into the trap of putting business men into the position of elders who are not capable with God’s Word to be able to effectively shepherd the flock of God which they are over. The four men that shepherd this church ought to be encouraged in their work of shepherding and be allowed to focus on that while others of us deal with the other duties that come with a church of this size and work. They’re in the position they are in to shepherd souls, and they ought to be encouraged and thanked for the work they do in that effort. They need to continually be encouraged because a church that doesn’t have been fulfilling these roles isn’t a church that is rightly and completely established according to the will and design of God.

II. Preachers who proclaim sound teaching.

1. Closely associated with the idea of overseers encouraging with sound doctrine is the need for preachers and teachers who would proclaim sound teaching to the congregation. While shepherding can be done on a large scale public level, I believe it is much more common for that work to be done one on one in a private setting. However, it was Titus’s job to proclaim publicly that which was ***“consistent with sound teaching.”*** (**2:1**) Notice that this was to be done in contrast to the detestable, disobedient, and unfit nature (**1:16**) of those who were causing trouble within the Cretan churches.
2. Whereas many were ruining entire households with that which was false, Paul’s charge to Titus was for him to ***“proclaim these things; encourage and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.”*** (**2:15**) This isn’t to say that Titus was to insert himself as *the* authority figure in the church as the solo pastor until these men were appointed to these positions of leadership, but it is to say that we must recognize the need for men who are willing to take a stand and teach with authority from the divinely-revealed Word of God. There is a tremendous need for men to take on the responsibility of being someone who will look into the Bible and find those things that are of sound doctrine and use them ***“for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”*** (**II Timothy 3:16,17**)
3. Why is there such a great need men who are willing to ***“Preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching?”*** (**II Timothy 4:2**) There is such a need because there are not enough men out there doing the work. I don’t have any concrete statistics to back this up, but there are plenty of churches out there who do not have men who have been willing to step up into this role so that a church can be rightly established. There are far more churches than there are capable men who are willing to go into a church and rightly set it in order as Titus was commanded to do on the island of Crete.
4. In my opinion, this is the case for at least a few reasons, but I’ll share just a couple with you. Firstly, there aren’t enough preachers because young men are not encouraged to grow up to pursue such a line of work. We encourage our sons, grandsons, and nephews to set their sights on important jobs in the secular world, but if those things don’t work out then you ***“can just fall back on preaching.”*** I’m not saying that every young man needs to be preacher or that every young man is

fit for this work, but I am saying that we need to speak better of this work because it is clear in this text that it is of the utmost importance. Further, I think that sheds a little light on another reason why there aren't enough capable preachers...preaching is a difficult work. It demands being willing to say hard things when people might not want to hear them and being made out to be the bad guy. It demands being in a spot where folks will want to blame you for their spiritual failings. I'd be lying if I tried to speak as if it is a work that doesn't come with its fair share of tough moments, but friends...this is a great work that we need to encourage our young men to consider because churches cannot be set up rightly if there are not men willing to preach sound doctrine.

III. Older members who are able to teach the younger.

1. Part of the work of the preacher is to encourage the membership of the church to interact and work together in such a way that they are able build one another up. In **2:2-7**, we read of Paul's desire for older men and women to behave in a godly manner.
 - a) The older men are told to be self-controlled, worthy of respect, and sensible in what they do. Additionally, they too are to be sound in faith, love, and perseverance. Even if their bodily health fails them, they are expected to continue to be spiritually whole and healthy.
 - b) In the same way, the older women are to be reverent in their behavior, not slanderers, not slaves to excessive drinking, and they are to set themselves up as those who can teach the younger women what is right and good in the sight of God.
2. Those instructions and encouragements from the older women to the younger women were to center around how they were to live as godly wives and mothers. They were to ***"love their husbands and to love their children, to be self-controlled, pure, workers at home, kind, and in submission to their husbands, so that God's Word will not be slandered."*** It makes much sense for the older women who have already experienced and learned in those roles to be the ones who would help to instruct those coming up behind them.
3. Further, Paul wants for the younger men to be encouraged in the ways of self-control in everything. It might even be understood that Paul is instructing Titus himself to make sure that he is setting a positive example of good works with integrity and dignity. I believe this makes sense when we consider that Paul then states that Titus's ***"message is to be sound beyond reproach."*** The need for Titus's work to be of this manner is so that no one would have opportunity to speak badly of either Titus or the gospel message that he was working to share. It isn't that we're simply supposed to be busy doing just anything, but we are to be busy doing that which is positive, productive, and leading to good and positive results among the members of the church. What a wonderful sight it is to be able to look out among a group of God's people and to see them working hard together, younger and older, to build each other up in sound faith and teaching. Such efforts are commonplace in churches that have been set up rightly, which is exactly what Titus was to be busy doing on Crete.

IV. Members who have been taught by the grace of God.

1. Finally, all of this leads up to the point that a church that is set up and rightly established is a church where the Gospel is strongly present and the grace of God that is accessed through it is active in teaching the members of the congregation in the ways in which they should go.
2. For example, Paul writes that the slaves among this group were to ***"submit to their masters in everything, and to be well-pleasing, not talking back or stealing, but demonstrating utter faithfulness, so that they may adorn the teaching of God our Savior in everything."*** (2:9,10) Paul then turns around and connects that with the appearing of the grace of God through Jesus. Jesus came to earth and brought salvation for all people, but that salvation is to be active and not passive. Meaning that there ought to be a response to the grace of God being present within our lives. That response can be seen from **2:12-3:11**.

- a) **2:12,13** — Paul begins by speaking to the grace of God *“instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts.”* There ought to be a distinct change that takes place when a person turns over control of his or her life to Jesus. Instead of doing that which the flesh desires, we are now to *“live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age.”* Not only is this to be done because it brings glory to God, but it also ought to be done while knowing that Jesus Christ is going to come back again in judgment. Grace prepares us for that day!
- b) **2:14** — We have opportunity to be prepared by the grace of God through the sacrifice of Jesus. He gave Himself so that we might be cleared, and so that we might begin to live in a new way that is eager to be busy doing the good works of God. That new way is befitting of those who are possessed by God as His people. This type of language echoes what we find in the Old Testament concerning Israel being God’s chosen people. **(Exodus 19:5)**
- c) **3:1-3** — The grace of God not only teaches us to behave rightly towards God, but it also instructs us on how we ought to interact with others. Paul reminds Titus to remind the disciples on Crete to *“submit to rulers and authorities, to obey, and be ready for every good work, to slander no one, to avoid fighting, and to be kind showing gentleness to all people.”* This type of lifestyle is set in opposition to the type of lives that they used to live as people who *“were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another.”* What made this change possible?
- d) **3:4-7** — It was the appearing of the kindness of God through Jesus that allowed for this radical transformation to take place, but we are reminded that this transformation was not of our doing. Instead, it was the doing of God’s *“mercy — through the washing of regeneration and the renewal by the Holy Spirit.”* This regeneration and renewal were made possible through Jesus and His sacrifice. Through it all, we not have the opportunity to be heirs of the hope of eternal life.
- e) **3:8-11** — With all of this in mind, Paul concludes by insisting that these brethren be careful to devote themselves to good works because it is good and profitable for everyone involved. It is good for the church to all be involved in good works towards God and others, but it needs to be done while avoiding things that might distract such as *“foolish debates, genealogies, quarrels, and disputes about the law, because they are unprofitable and worthless.”* Those who would detract from the good works of the group would eventually need to be rejected all together after a first and second warning. There is no place in a rightly set-up church for people who refuse to be instructed by and work according to the grace of God that leads us on the path of faithfulness and good works.

Paul concludes his letter to Titus by encouraging him to assist certain men who would be coming by, and then he writes these final encouragements, *“Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works for pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.”* That sentence alone sums up well this letter to Titus. There were pressing needs for this church to be set up rightly in those things that were undone so that they might be fruitful for the Lord. May this church continue to strive in these exact same efforts so that we too might be fruitful for the Lord in all things. Praise God for His blessings upon this church...for our shepherds, those who preach and teach, the common work between the younger and older, and the teachings of grace that are evident in this place. May we each take these encouragements and go throughout this week striving to be busy in the good work that is set before us to do.