

Mount Pisgah A.M.E Church

Rev. Jay B. Broadnax, Pastor

Bible Study, Wednesday, February 17, 2016

Survey of the Bible

Lesson 58: Titus

The Book of Titus

The book of Titus is the second of the three “pastoral epistles” (First Timothy being the first, and Second Timothy the third). The pastoral epistles are so named because they are not written to entire congregations, but rather to advise individual leaders. The book is written in similar fashion to First Timothy and written for a similar purpose: to assist a young pastor in establishing the right leadership, establishing proper doctrinal beliefs, and exhibiting proper behaviors to keep the church strong. It is written in similar fashion to 1 Timothy.

Author

The pastoral epistles are generally regarded as a unit, and thus their authorship is attributed to Paul. External evidence (early non-biblical writings) refers to them and indicates that Paul wrote them. More modern critics argue that their style of writing, language/words used, and theological emphases seem different from Paul’s normal writing. However, as was argued for First Timothy and Second Timothy, the audience, season of Paul’s life, and circumstances may have required that Paul write in a different manner.

The Times and context of Titus

Titus is not mentioned in Acts, but the thirteen references to him in Paul’s other letters make it clear that he was one Paul’s closest and most trusted companions. He was evidently a convert of Paul’s, probably from Antioch. Paul brought him to the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 (see Galatians 2:3) where he became a test case on the matter of Gentiles and liberty from the law. He evidently accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey because he was sent by Paul to Corinth on several occasions to carry his communications to them.

Reconstructing the times of Paul’s life that took place after his Roman imprisonment at the end of Acts, evidently he made a fourth missionary journey through Asia Minor, Macedonia, Crete, Greece, and Spain. Paul was accompanied by several of his loyal followers, including Titus and Timothy. His first stop was Ephesus, where he had spent significant time during his third journey and developed a close relationship with the elders there. He left Timothy there and went to Macedonia (where he wrote 1 Timothy). After Macedonia he went to the Mediterranean island of Crete.

Crete was a large island (30 miles wide and 156 miles long). Its first century inhabitants were notorious for their untruthfulness and immorality. The phrase “to act like a Cretan” was equated with being a liar with a penchant for vice. Although there may have been believers already there (some Cretans were present at Peter’s Pentecost sermon – see Acts 2:11) it is likely that Paul’s preaching was responsible for a church being established there. Paul spread the gospel in the cities of Crete, and then left Titus there to finish organizing the churches. Because of the morality problems there, it was important for Titus to stress the need for righteousness in Christian living. False teachers were misleading and divisive. Paul wrote this letter in 63 AD, probably from Corinth, and it was delivered by Zenas and Apollos (3:13).

Paul was planning to spend his winter in Nicopolis (western Greece), and he urged Titus to join him there later.

Overview

Titus, like First Timothy, was written by Paul to an associate who was given the task of organizing and supervising a large work as an apostolic representative. Paul left Titus on the island to “straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders (*Gk presbyteros*) in every town.” Paul writes this letter to guide young Titus on how to establish the churches. He begins by telling him how to identify leaders, follows with a clarification of what “right doctrine” is, and concludes with how this plays out in living life.

Outline

- I. Right Leadership and its Importance(1:1-1:16)**
 - A. Salutation and introduction (1:1-1:4)
 - B. Titus’ Task: Appoint Leadership (1:5-1:9)
 - 1. His Charge (1:5)
 - 2. Qualifications for Elders (1:6)
 - 3. Qualifications for Overseers (Bishops) (1:7-1:9)
 - C. What We’re Up Against (1:10-1:16)
 - 1. False Teachers (1:10-1:11)
 - 2. Adding Fuel To The Fire (1:12-1:13a)
 - 3. How They Must Be Handled and Why (1:13b- 1:16)
- II. Right Doctrine (2:1-2:15)**
 - A. Sound Doctrine Effects Godly Character (2:1-2:15)
 - 1. Commandment to Teach (2:1)
 - 2. Groups (2:2-2:10)
 - a) Older Men (2:2)
 - b) Older Women (2:3)
 - c) Younger Women (2:4-2:5)
 - d) Young Men, (2:6)
 - e) Titus’ Personal Witness (2:7-2:8)
 - f) Slaves (2:9-2:10)
 - 3. The True Evidence of God’s Presence (2:11-2:15)
- III. Right Living (3:1-3:15)**
 - A. Obligations as Citizens (3:1-3:2)
 - B. The Motives For Godly Conduct(3:3-3:8)
 - 1. Our Past (3:3)
 - 2. Our Present (3:4-3:7)
 - 3. Connect Doctrine to Lifestyle (3:8)
 - C. Reaction to Spiritual Error (3:9-3:11)
 - D. Concluding Remarks (3:12-3:15)

Some Keys to understanding The Book of Titus

- Several words for leaders are used by Paul in Titus:
 - Apostle (*apostolos*) – An ambassador of the Gospel, one commissioned by Christ to proclaim and establish.
 - Elder (*presbuteros*) – A spiritually mature person who presides over assemblies.
 - Overseer/Bishop (*episkopos*) – Supervisor, one charged with seeing that things are done rightly by subordinates (typically elders and deacons).

In Titus, some argue that the words Elder and Bishop are used interchangeably (i.e., really refer to the same people). However since Crete is a large island, it's possible that a Bishop or Bishops were needed to superintend the entire work at Crete, and Elders were needed to oversee work in the individual towns.

Also, in Titus, Paul talks about Bishops and Elders, where in First Timothy Paul talks about Bishops and Deacons (*diakonos*). It is possible that the needs in Ephesus and Crete were sufficiently different to require a different leadership structure.

- This “conduct manual” is written to exhort Titus to firmly exercise his authority as an apostolic representative to the churches that need to be put in order, refuting false teachers and dissenters and replacing immoral behavior with good deeds.
- As with First Timothy, the underlying assumption is that right doctrine (orthodoxy) will lead to right living (orthopraxy).
- The models of the household, as in the other Pastoral Epistles, represent the normal order of things in this Greco-Roman society. Paul's concern was to protect families by keeping them above reproach (“to protect the word of God” 3:5). They do not represent support for the institutions, merely how to survive within them.

Some Lessons from Titus

- In a place/time where there is rampant immorality, it is especially important for Christians to represent something different – to strive to live in a way that is pleasing to God. This is not merely true of people who occupy positions of authority, but since ALL believers are called to be witnesses for Christ, so that we might attract those who are hungry for a different way to live.
- If we assume that there was a reason that Paul spoke of different types of leaders in First Timothy versus Titus, we can gather that different leadership models might be required in different situations. One of the things that make Methodists different from Baptists and Baptists different from Presbyterians and Episcopalians is their leadership structure and polity. Our denominational differences often find their sources in *situational* ethics. If we kept this in mind it might help us to not see those differences as reasons to be divided. There is room for different approaches in The Body of Christ.
- We receive the power to “say no” to ungodliness, even when it is the norm, only by receiving the grace of God, and allowing God's power to purge and purify us. Only as God works in our hearts will we be empowered to live the kind of lives that God desires for us.
- Even though Paul was pretty condescending about the Cretans, he realized that “we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures” until God saved him, and the Holy Spirit washed him. We ought to understand that as those born in sin, there is no limit to what we could have been caught up in except for the grace of God. When we are tempted to shake our heads at the stupidity or lack of character of others, we ought to be reminded that “that could've been me.”
- Overly legalistic people harping on unimportant issues (issues not directly concerned with the gospel and love's demonstration) can cause unnecessary division in the church. People bringing such drama should be prayed for but avoided.