

Time to Reflect

- How do we deal with conflict? Do we pray when difficult times arise? Are we willing to wait for God to speak into these difficulties?
- In what ways does our faith positively impact the lives of other people?

We have now reached the final of our reflections on Titus. This short letter has challenged us to think about a range of issues and it has encouraged us to journey deeper in our relationship with God. As we approach the closing verses (v9-15) we encounter some final instructions, not least how to deal with difficult people (v9-11) within the Church.

“Over the centuries of her existence, the Church has both been plagued with (people) who have caused great division and blessed with (people) who have done great good. In this closing section of Paul’s letter we encounter the two types. Helpful instruction is given as to how we should deal with the first and how we should encourage the second.”

(David Campbell, *Opening Up Titus*, p107)

Passage Specifics

- (v12) shows us that Paul wanted Titus to come to him at Nicopolis (in modern Greece) and either Artemas or Tychicus would be sent to Crete. Interestingly, the latter of these two Christian leaders was a trusted companion of Paul’s, who travelled with or for Paul on various occasions.
- In the mean time, there was still plenty for Titus to do as he sought to “...straighten out what was left unfinished” (1:5). As we have studied Paul’s letter to Titus we have gained some insight as to what was left to be done – elders were to be appointed, false teachers had to be dealt with, and the whole Christian assembly was to be stirred up.
- In the concluding verses of this letter we read Paul’s final instructions, which call Titus to engage with two types of people.

1. Those who were causing trouble in the Church

- There were individuals in the Cretan churches who engaged in false teaching and were negative influencers. Paul had already addressed this in Chapter 1 but he now returns to it.
- This should cause us to take note. This issue was so significant that it warranted a double mention.
- In (v9-11) it is difficult to ascertain exactly what these troublemakers were saying. Some general indicators are given as Paul refers to “...foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law...”
- When we read (1:14) we encounter the phrase “Jewish myths” so we assume that that the false teachers were Jews who focused on teaching stories about their ancestors and such like.
- The atmosphere of quarrelling and division was apparent in the Cretan Church. This is a toxic environment for any Christian community and only ever leads to polarisation and conflict.

- Paul offered Titus some clear instruction as to how to deal with, and respond to, those who were causing trouble in the Church.

(a) Avoid Imitating Them

- In (v9) we encounter the word 'avoid.' For many of us our default reaction may be to avoid confrontation. In truth, very few people actually enjoy conflict.
- But what we read about here is not a form of appeasement. Paul encouraged Titus not to be drawn into foolish controversies. This is a challenge for Christian leaders, and Christian people, to remain focused on the bigger picture.
- There is so much that can occupy our time, drain our energy, and distract us from the work that really needs to be done.
- Titus was instructed to be wise, selective and focused. He was not to become like, or imitate, the false teachers. He was to rise above this and deal with what is profitable and useful as opposed to that which was unprofitable and useless (v9). He was to focus on sound doctrine (2:1).
- This is a call for each of us to be biblical people, grounded in the teaching of Scripture, and focused on playing our part in advancing God's Kingdom.

(b) Deal Decisively With Them

- Previously (1:11), Paul said that false teachers needed to be silenced. (v10-11) build on this foundation and show the importance of decisive action. Note how Paul called the troublemaker a 'divisive person.'
- It is truly sad when division creeps into the Church. It overshadows the mission and ministry of the Church and hinders faith development. This is why Paul encourages decisive action.
- Firstly, a warning is to be given to a divisive person (v10). If this solves the problem then all is well. If not, then a second course of action is required. Another warning is to be given. This is the issuing of a second chance. Hereafter, if a person won't listen to Christian instruction, Paul instructs Titus to have nothing more to do with them. Isn't (v11) simply heartbreaking?
- Stubbornness and self-centredness lead to isolation. This can, however, be rectified by true repentance.

2. Those who were a blessing to the Church

- Paul commended Artemas, Tychicus, Zenas and Apollos (v12-13). Such people really are a blessing to the Church and Paul challenged Titus to help them in any way that he could (v13).
- But it isn't just those in positions of leadership who are a blessing to the Church. In (v14) Paul speaks of "Our people" who must devote themselves to doing what is good on a daily basis. This is a call for all Christians to live out their faith in meaningful and practical ways.
- Bringing blessings to others should be a defining mark of any Christian congregation. This is an active way to live out the Great Commission.
- Such behaviour and conduct stands in stark contrast to the negativity of division and conflict. People who engage in such positive Christian living are an incredible blessing to the Church.
- This was Paul's vision for the people of God and it should be our vision if we are serious about becoming the people that God would have us be.

Note how our passage ended with Paul focusing, once more, on grace. He started with grace (1:4) and now he ends with grace (3:15). All of us are totally dependant on God's grace and it should shine brightly from us as we seek to live as God's people.

"I rejected the church for a time because I found so little grace there. I returned because I found grace nowhere else." (Philip Yancey)