

Synthetic Bible Studies

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and
Bible Expositions

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LESSON SEVENTEEN

TITUS

The previous lesson gives the reasons leading to the opinion that the Epistle to Titus was written prior to the second to Timothy. Alford and others suppose that after Paul's liberation from prison (Acts 28), he journeyed eastward as anticipated in Philemon 22 and Philippians 1:26; 2:24, and visited Ephesus again.

Other journeys to the west followed, occupying three or four years, during which time, it is thought, he visited Crete in company with Titus, leaving him there to complete the organization of the church in that place and neighborhood. This church had probably been founded prior to this time, and now the same kind of heresy is beginning to show itself as in the case of the church at Ephesus over which Timothy had been set.

The Epistle to Titus was probably written from some point in Asia Minor where Paul was stopping on his way to winter at Nicopolis in Greece (3:12). Crete is a small island to the west of Cyprus and where the waters of the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas may be said to meet. No account is found in the Acts as to the circumstances under which the church originated there, but it is probable the seed of the Gospel was borne to the island by some of the Jewish converts at Jerusalem on the memorable Day of Pentecost.

Of Titus himself also little is known. The earliest references to him are those in Galatians, where we learn that he was a Gentile, probably one of Paul's own converts, who accompanied him and Barnabas to Jerusalem at the time of the convening of the first council (Acts 15). See Galatians

2:1-4.

He is mentioned again several times in II Corinthians, where he seems to have been sent by Paul on a mission to Corinth from Ephesus (II Corinthians 8:6; 12:18). See other references to him in the same connection in that Epistle, in chapters 2 and 7. For a number of years he is lost sight of after this, until we now find him at Crete.

His later career does not seem to have been all that it might have been so far as his loyalty to the person of the apostle is concerned, if we may judge from the slight allusion to him in II Timothy 4:10. During Paul's second imprisonment at Rome he seems not to have remained with him.

Outline of the Epistle

The Epistle may be outlined thus:

1. The salutation (1:1-4).
2. The commission to Titus (vv. 5-9). In these verses it will be seen that the duties of Titus at Crete were substantially those of Timothy at Ephesus, noted in our last lesson. Reference to that will throw light on this.
3. The description of false teachers (vv. 10-16). The need of the elders and overseers just referred to, and especially the need of such as Paul had indicated, was seen in the heresies that were rife in the church, and which were much of the same character as those mentioned in the previous Epistle to Timothy. The errorists, as in the other case, were chiefly Jews (v. 10). The language referring to them in verses 12 and 13 is particularly striking, since Paul there quotes from one of their own poets against them (Epimenides), whose witness is borne out by other ancient writers as Livy, Plutarch, Polybius and Strabo, who speak of the Cretan's love of gain, natural ferocity, fraud, falsehood, and general depravity.

Titus did not have an easy place to fill, and the study of his work ought to bring comfort to a good many Christian workers under not very different surroundings to-day.

There is a statement also in verse 15 that calls for particular attention.

"To the pure all things are pure," is an aphorism often very greatly abused. To understand it, turn back to I Timothy 4:4. The reference here in Titus is the same as there, (and indeed also in Romans 14:20), to the eating of certain meats which the Jewish law forbade on ceremonial grounds.

The Jewish professing Christians referred to previously as false teachers, were seeking to impose these customs, or similar ones, upon the young converts from Gentilism, and Paul was withstanding them by saying, just as he had contended all along, and as GOD Himself had taught Peter on the housetop in Acts 10, that there was nothing of this kind unclean in itself. That is, it was not sinful for a Christian to eat such things.

The "pure" in this case means those who are sanctified by faith, true believers on the Lord

JESUS CHRIST. Such are not bound by the Jewish fables and commandments of men in the matter of ritualistic eating and drinking, but are at liberty to eat all the creatures of GOD set apart for their use, without sin.

How monstrous in the light of the true meaning of the inspired apostle's words, for people of the world and semi-Christians to employ them as a permission to look at obscene pictures in art galleries, and listen to lewd stories, and read impure books, and witness impure plays at the theater. These very actions on their part testify that they are not the "pure" whom Paul has in mind at all, but the defiled and the unbelieving rather, referred to later in the same verse. **"They profess that they know God, but by their works they deny him."**

4. Instructions concerning church members (2:1-3:11). Paul now enters upon instructions to Titus as he had done in the case of Timothy concerning his dealings with different classes in the church.

Aged men are first spoken of (vv. 1, 2). It is of the nature of sound or healthful doctrine that these be of the character herein described.

Aged women are next referred to (v. 3), and under cover of that exhortation comes an allusion to the younger women (vv. 4, 5). It is noticeable that Titus does not exhort the young women directly on the themes indicated, but indirectly through the older women. A hint here for Christian workers in our own time, and especially in slum districts, where discretion is to be observed in dealings between the sexes.

The young men come in for treatment next (v. 6), to whom Titus, himself evidently a young man, was to be careful to set the right example (vv. 7,8).

Then follows an exhortation for servants, where bondservants or slaves are meant (vv. 9, 10). "The duties of these last, and indeed of all classes, are grounded on the moral purpose of GOD in the Gospel concerning us" (vv. 11, 14).

These last named verses are full of strong meat, and will bear close analysis. See what the Christian's hope is, as set forth in verse 13. Observe the two-fold object which CHRIST, our Saviour, had in view in the work of the Cross (v. 14), and the obligation it lays upon us believers, as shown in verse 12.

All these several classes are now put in mind of their duties and obligations with reference to the civil powers, and perhaps to outsiders and unbelievers generally (3:1-3); an exhortation affording the writer another opportunity, often improved, of contrasting the present state and condition of believers with that in which they were prior to their salvation.

Here again we find a rich and precious declaration of Gospel truth in words which should be learned by heart (vv. 4-7). The theme is salvation.

- how not was it effected?
- how was it effected?
- when, at what period of time?
- what is the result?

Indeed, the eighth verse might be included here also, as showing the obligation of the saved growing out of their salvation.

Titus was to constantly affirm these things, avoiding other things and subjects of discussion that might come up (v. 9). What a lesson for the ministers and teachers of our own time! Finally, he is directed how to deal with these false teachers and their followers (vv. 10, 11).

5. Personal directions and commissions (vv. 12-15). A messenger from Paul is shortly to be sent to Titus, perhaps a successor to relieve him in his office (v. 12), and then he himself is to hasten to Paul at the place where he intends to spend the winter.

In the meantime he is to show diligence in advancing the interests of two other brethren named who are perhaps journeying to meet Paul ahead of him (v. 13). He breaks into these personal matters for a moment, however, in order to set forth a further exhortation to the church along practical lines (v. 14). "Let ours, or our people, also learn to maintain good works, or profess honest occupations, for necessary uses, or necessary wants, that they be not unfruitful." It is possible that by "ours" or "our people" here, the apostle may be referring to the leaders in the church such as the two mentioned in the previous verse; and the "honest occupations" may mean the necessary labor to provide the means for just such missionary journeys as that contemplated in the context. Here is a valuable suggestion, surely, for those among us who are contemplating similar work for the Lord. It would, if acted upon, make them very independent of societies, and mission boards. And happily, it is being acted on by not a few, and with the most blessed results, for GOD **"is the same yesterday, to-day and forever."**

~ end of Lesson 17 ~
