

THE EPISTLE TO TITUS

An Expanded Paraphrase

I. SALUTATION (Ch. 1: 1-4)

TO Titus, my true-born son in our common faith, this letter comes from Paul, bonds slave of God and apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's chosen people and the knowledge of the truth which our religion unfolds along with the hope of eternal life. This eternal life was promised untold ages ago by God, who cannot lie, but now in His own appointed time He has published His message abroad in the proclamation with which I have been entrusted, by the commandment of God our Saviour. Grace and peace be yours, Titus, from God our Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.

II. ELDERS AND OTHER MINISTERS (Ch. 1: 5-9)

The reason I left you behind in Crete was this: I wanted you to set right the things that remained to be dealt with, and in particular to appoint elders in each city, in accordance with my directions.

You remember those directions of mine about the kind of man who is fit to be appointed as an elder—one who is beyond reproach, faithful to one wife, and with children who are themselves believers and not open to the charge of being profligate or insubordinate. The man who exercises pastoral leadership must be beyond reproach because that befits a steward in God's house. He must not be self-assertive or quarrelsome; he must not be given to drink or subject to a violent temper. Neither should he be impelled by motives of material gain; on the contrary, he should be hospitable, a lover of all that is good, sober, just, pious, self-controlled, devoted to the trustworthy message which accords with the (apostolic) teaching. He will then be able not only to encourage his hearers in sound doctrine but also to refute those who contradict it.

III. THE REFUTATION OF ERROR (Ch. 1: 10-16)

Such refutation is necessary, for there are many insubordinate characters who deceive people's minds with their empty arguments—I think especially of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, for they subvert whole households with their false teaching, all for base love of material gain.

It was a Cretan, a prophet of their own,¹ who said:

Cretans are always liars, dangerous beasts, idle bellies.

¹ Epimenides the Cretan (6th century B.C.), who is quoted also in Acts 17: 28 ("for in him we live and move and have our being").

His testimony is true. So, refute them sharply ; teach them to be sound in the faith and pay no heed to Jewish myths and human regulations which subvert the truth. Everything is pure to those who are pure ; but to men who are polluted and void of faith nothing is pure ; their mind and conscience are alike defiled. They profess to know God, but by their actions they deny Him ; they are detestable and disobedient, and have disqualified themselves for any good work.

IV. DUTIES OF CHURCH MEMBERS (Ch. 2: 1-10)

But you, Titus, must speak words that are in keeping with sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate in the use of wine, reverent and sober in their habits, sound in faith and love and patience. Teach the older women similarly to be dignified in their demeanour, not scandalmongers or over-addicted to wine, but teachers of all that is good. Then in their turn they will encourage the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be sober and chaste, to do their housework and be good and obedient to their husbands. Otherwise the word of God might be brought into disrepute. Urge the younger men similarly to be sober in all their ways ; let them see in you an example of good works, purity of doctrine and reverence in manner, wholesome language that is beyond reproach. Then our opponents will be confounded, because they will find nothing bad to say about us. Teach slaves to be perfectly obedient to their masters and give them satisfactory service, and not contradict them or appropriate things that don't belong to them. They should be marked consistently by good faith, and thus be ornaments to the doctrine of God our Saviour.

V. RESPONSE TO GOD'S GRACE (Ch. 2: 11-15)

The grace of God has shone in upon us, bearing salvation for all mankind ; and this grace leads us to renounce impiety and worldly desires and live sober, righteous and godly lives in this present age, as we wait expectantly for our joyful hope. And what is our hope? It is the appearance of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Christ Jesus. He it is who gave Himself up on our behalf to ransom us from lawlessness of every kind and purify a people for His very own, eagerly practising good works.

These are the things which you must inculcate with full authority ; they should be the substance of your encouragement and reproof. See to it that no one despises you.

VI. THE CHRISTIAN IN THE WORLD (Ch. 3: 1-7)

Remind them to be submissive and obedient to the ruling authorities, and to be ready to turn their hands to every good

work. Teach them to speak evil of none, to be peaceable and gentle, showing perfect courtesy to everyone. Once upon a time we ourselves were foolish and disobedient, led astray and enslaved by various cravings and pleasures, spending our lives in malice and envy, hateful ourselves, and hating one another. But when once there dawned upon us the kindness of God our Saviour, His love for mankind, then He saved us from all those things. This came about through no righteous works of ours but by His own mercy, through the washing which brought us new birth and the renewal which the Holy Spirit imparted. He poured out His Spirit upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, justified by His grace, we might become heirs of eternal life, in conformity with the Christian hope.

VII. GOOD WORKS AND USELESS PURSUITS (Ch. 3: 8-11)

Here is a trustworthy saying²; this is what I want you to insist on: "Those who have put their trust in God must be careful to engage in good works." Such things are worthy and useful for men. But avoid foolish debates and genealogies, disputes and quarrels about the law. Such things are useless and futile. Have nothing more to do with a factious man after he has received a first and a second warning; be well assured that a man like that is a perverted and self-condemned sinner.

VIII. PERSONAL NOTES (Ch. 3: 12-14)

When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make haste and come to me at Nicopolis. I have decided to spend the winter there. Be sure you help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos forward on their journey as well as you can; see that they lack nothing. Our people must learn to engage in good works by way of relieving the pressing needs of others; they must not be useless.

IX. FINAL GREETINGS AND BLESSING (Ch. 3: 15)

All those who are with me send you their greetings. Give our greetings to all who love us in the bond of faith. Grace be with you all.³

² For other "trustworthy sayings" in the Pastoral Epistles see 1 Tim. 1: 15; 3: 1; 4: 9; 2 Tim. 2: 4. In this place the "trustworthy saying" is perhaps the *preceding* sentence: "He poured out His Spirit . . . the Christian hope."

³ This concludes the series of "expanded paraphrases" of the Pauline Epistles. It is hoped to publish a revision of them in book form shortly.