

(Titus - Part 2): An Introduction to Titus

by A.W. Tozer

The book of Titus is a letter written by Paul to Titus, a young pastor, to guide him in his ministry on the island of Crete and to promote the faith among God's elect.

Duration: 40:41

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Titus 1:1-2, Titus 1:4, Titus 1:16, Titus 3:7

Topics: "Titus"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker announces the start of a new series on the careful study of the Sermon on the Mount. He encourages everyone to attend the first sermon and emphasizes the importance of baptism for those who have been converted to Christ. The speaker then mentions a baptismal service and urges anyone who has not been baptized to approach him or Mr. McPhee. He also mentions his upcoming sermon on the voice of eternal wisdom and expresses his enthusiasm for preaching about good things that warm the heart.

Transcript

Tonight at the seven o'clock hour, after a time of those inspiring songs, I want to give my second in a series on the voice of eternal wisdom. I don't know how I got into this. It is so delightful and so elevating to my heart, yet requires such tremendous preparation that, honestly, it is taking a lot out of me.

But I enjoy it, and I think that you probably wouldn't hear this anywhere else. It isn't that I'm a better preacher, for there are better preachers in this city than I am by far. It's simply that I preach about good things.

That I will admit. I'll say that about myself. I'm not the best preacher in Chicago, but I preach about some things that will warm your heart.

And this is one of them. Jesus Christ as the incarnation of the ancient Hebrew idea of eternal wisdom, out of which everything grew. And on Wednesday at 7.30 sharp, we begin a new series.

It is the careful study of the Sermon on the Mount. We'd like everybody out to get the very first one, and follow through for those three chapters. At baptismal service, which has been announced, I'd like you to take this seriously, and of any of you who have been converted to Christ, here or anywhere, and yet not been baptized, you see me, see Mr. McPhee, Mr. Moore, or anyone you know, give them your name and

address, in order that we might take the right steps about this matter of baptism.

The Lord is still pleased to allow the light of the Church to move out. Mr. McPhee and I were sitting in a restaurant yesterday, and a great, big, fine-looking young preacher, happy in his happy thirties, I wouldn't call that a boy, but probably was in his thirties, came by, stopped, made himself known, said he was a pastor of a church, and I had always walked by that gray church, and thought, well, that's a liberal church, that's modernistic, and I'd heard that it was. And I don't even know now that it isn't or hasn't been.

But this man stopped and told me that he was, using his own words, an avid reader of the Alliance, witness. And Mr. McPhee told him about our praying and said, would you like to come up sometime for our prayer meeting, Tuesdays, Thursdays, or Saturdays? And he said, could I bring some other men along? So we don't know what will come of this. Then I got a letter here, which I rather like.

I rather like it. It's from Winnetka, up there where all the money is, and who's who and all the rest. And it's from a lady who heard the talk I gave to the Youth for Christ.

And she sat down and sent the church a check for \$100. I don't suppose she's ever seen this church, but I got a check here. I hope that the financial secretary will remind me I don't carry this home with me.

But it came addressed to me, and so it isn't mine. It's for the church. Had my name on it, I'd have still turned it over.

I always do, unless it's in that rare once in six, seven years, somebody says, this is for you, that very rare. But if it does, then I keep it. But if it's just addressed to me or to the church, it goes over to the church.

Well, now let us turn to Titus, that book of Titus. I talked about Titus the man and didn't talk about the book of Titus. But let's look at the first two verses.

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and acknowledge of the truth which is after God in us. I don't think we need to go beyond that, that first, first word, first verse. That's as far as we'll get.

Now this book of Titus was here when you got here, and the first Bible that was given you had it in. And it has been bound with our other 65 books of the Bible since the second or first, latter part of the first century. And for that reason, it's hard for us to visualize it ever having not been.

To us it seems as if it had always been, but it hasn't, wasn't. Well, there was a time when the book of Titus didn't exist, the time when a man wrote that book. And he wrote it for a purpose, for it is a letter, a very urgent letter.

Some expositors and translators complain that the word epistle should not be used because that word epistle is too conventional and dignified a word. This is a letter. It is, it was sent by Paul to Titus who was on Crete, the island of Crete in the Aegean Sea.

And this is not a literary composition, though it of course in our sonorous King James is a very beautiful thing. It is not a literary composition, very carefully polished. I have discovered that nothing that is religious, that is a mere literary composition, ever lives.

Or if it is perpetuated because of its sheer beauty, it never helps anybody. I think, for instance, of Gray's Elegy in a Country Churchyard. The curfew tolls the knell of parting day.

The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lee. Plowman homeward winds his weary way and leaves the world to darkness and to me. Now that is so beautiful that it's like a gem.

I've gone over that from beginning to end and have discovered that every line has hidden alliteration in it so that it has music, it's music. It's like running over a keyboard. It took him seven years to write that.

But you know I have my first time yet to hear any pastor say, you know I was over at such-and-such's home the other day to visit dear old Mrs. So-and-so who's on her last deathbed, and she asked me whether I wouldn't read Gray's Elegy to comfort her. Nobody ever did that. And then there's that one by Tennyson, Sunset and Evening Star and One Clear Call for Me and May There Be No Moaning at the Bar When I Put Out to Sea.

You can't deny that that's music and beauty. But nobody ever asked anybody to read that. Sometimes preachers read that after somebody's dead and can't help themselves.

But nobody ever said, Pastor, I'd like you to read Sunset and Evening Star. It's too gloomy. It's a beautiful thing, but it was a polished literary composition.

But you know I imagine how many there were who and are, who have in their troubles and griefs read In Hope of Eternal Life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began, but hath in due time manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me, Titus, mine own son, in the common faith, and so on, on down the line, clear through to the end, about the God that cannot lie. That's because this, that's, the reason that that is loved and chosen and cherished and has been by the saints all down the years is that it is written by a man who was at the battlefield. And he wrote it literally in his own sweat and blood, quite literally, for he sweat and bled.

And he wrote this to the man of God who was in a hard place doing a hard work. This is a communique from a general to a subordinate. It is written from one field of action to another.

And there aren't many communiques that are very carefully worded, and MacArthur used to write some sonorous prose, but outside of that usually they're pretty jerky and brief. And this book of Titus is remarkably lovely English in our present King James form, in spite of the fact that it was a hot, brief communique written by the great apostle Paul to his assistant Titus, whom he had left on Crete to straighten things out and to raise the moral standards of the Cretan Christians. Now, let's talk a little about this island of Crete and the Cretans.

Now, I know it says Christian in the King James, but all other translations call it Cretan, and it's called Cretan now, so let's call it Crete. The island of Crete, or sometimes called Candia, was the fourth largest island in the Aegean chain. And I looked it up, and I find that the history of Crete goes back 3,500 years before Christ.

There was civilization on that island 3,500 years before Christ was born in Bethlehem. And at the time that Paul wrote, and oh, for years before that, centuries before that, it had been inhabited by a bad mixture of races, and it had an equally bad mixture of religions. And the people warred among themselves, little cities warring against other little cities, and its religion.

Oh, they said Zeus was born there, the Greek, older Greek god who was the counterpart of the Jupiter of the Romans. They said he was born on that island. I don't know what it meant or whether they meant anything particularly, but then old Bacchus was supposed to be there, and of course, as you know,

Bacchus was the god of the grape and wine.

And they carried it on logically, and the result was that the people, the heathen religions practiced, in their rites, drunkenness. They used to get drunk, gloriously drunk in order to practice their, in order to show Bacchus that they appreciated the grape out of which the wine was made. Well, it's had a bad reputation.

There isn't very much good that can be said about it, and the historians say that when all the great trouble was going on in Greece, that Crete practically did nothing at all, just lay around and drank and argued and fought with themselves. And the people had a bad reputation, and they'd had a bad reputation. Oh, three, four hundred years before Christ was born, there was a man on the island who wasn't a bad man.

His name was Epimenides. That sounds as if it might be a pun, but actually it's a real man's name, Epimenides. And he was a good man, presumably.

They called him a prophet, and they looked up to him, and finally made a kind of a demigod out of him. And he wrote himself a poem about the Cretans, and it started off with these terrible words, Cretans are always liars. Paul quotes it here, you know.

Cretans are always liars, evil beasts and slow bellies. That was the first line of their prophet. Paul had read this, no doubt, and studied this, just the way we have to study Shakespeare and Emerson and Bacon when we go to school.

He studied Epimenides, and he remembered what, after he got converted and became an apostle, he remembered what Epimenides had said about the Cretans. He said the Cretans are always liars, evil beasts and slow bellies. Now he said to Titus, that's the kind of people you're among, therefore regroup them sharply.

Now there was a church on this island, and I've searched into how that church got onto that island, and I don't know for sure. It started one of two ways. Paul didn't found it.

It started by one of two ways. It was either the work of missionaries, for you remember that when they were scattered abroad upon the persecution of Stephen, they went everywhere preaching, and the Lord went with them confirming this word with sign following, and there were churches founded, and either somebody got in a boat and paddled over to Crete and started a little church there and it grew, or else, and I think this probably is a better explanation, that Jews who came in contact with Paul or other apostles or Christians, various places, then went back home to Crete where they lived, for there were Jews on Crete, as if there were any place where there weren't Jews or aren't Jews. There were Jews on Crete, and those converted Jews went back and started the church.

Some people think that, and I think that sounds as if it might be the fact. These Jews, you know, were always traveling. They're merchants, and they buy and sell and take little ships.

They used to take little ships and go and get stuff and bring it back and sell it at a profit. And some of them, when they were over there, like Lydia, who was a seller of purple, came in contact with Paul and got converted. Somebody got over there, evidently, a Jewish merchant, and ran into a Christian, and he got converted and went back home and started telling the story, and pretty soon he had the church going, and that caught fire, and pretty soon the island of Crete had quite a number of churches.

There were quite a number of them, and they were large churches, and this, of course, attracted Paul's attention. And Paul went over to investigate what was going on in that island of Crete, and he found both good and bad. He found a lot of churches, and he found them numerically strong.

But he also found that while there were many who called themselves Christian, and Paul was willing to believe that they were, their lives were not godly. They were too much influenced by the Cretans, for the Cretans, you know, were all around about them. They were a minority group, small in proportion to the large number who dwelt on Crete, and the general moral level of Crete was low, and these Christians, while they accepted Jesus Christ as the Savior and began to pray and trust him as Redeemer, they didn't have enough strong teachers to show them that a Christian is not only somebody who believes on Jesus, he's somebody who is a disciple of Jesus and who belongs to a new order and must live another kind of life.

They didn't know that. And so there was a lot of influence by the Cretans. The evil influence harmed the church, and their conduct was not in accord with Christ.

Their political conduct was not good. You see, the way to read the epistles is this. If I had a disease and you didn't know what it was and hadn't any way of discovering it, but you went to my doctor and he didn't tell you what it was, but he told you what he was giving me for it, you could figure out what I had by what he was giving me.

If you had a lot of intelligence, and I assume you do, you could easily figure out my disease by what they gave me. Well, now you can read the epistles and you can tell what was wrong in Corinth or Rome or Ephesus or Colossae or on Crete. You can tell what was wrong by the medicine Paul prescribed.

And I will say this, that Paul was a believer in the old-fashioned medicine that the bitter it is, the quicker it cures. And some of his medicine was mighty strong, and so in this book of Titus he really prescribed some strong bitter medicine. They weren't politically right and they weren't industrially right.

He found out that some of the Christians, because they were Christians and worked for men who were Christians, they took advantage of the fact that they were brethren and loafed around. Paul handed them that and said, take one of these before each meal and straighten that out. And then they were not socially right.

Some of the old ladies were in gossips and the young women didn't stay home and the young men weren't doing right and some of the old fellows weren't good examples. So Paul tried to straighten the whole business out. He told Titus what to say.

They badly needed order and discipline. So that's why the book of Titus was written. Now Paul leaves Titus over on Crete.

He says that he might straighten out things. But let's look a little here at this first, this very first Paul, a servant of God and apostle of Jesus Christ. Now that word servant is a rather nice word and it's a soft, smooth word in our English, but it isn't actually the word that was here.

The word that was here was slave, and that's not a nice word. Born servant, slave. See, the Roman people were divided up into three classes generally.

There were the patricians. They were the 400, the high authorities, and usually the priests were made. Their heathen priests came out of that class.

They got in who's who. They had the yachts and the big ranch houses. They were the patricians.

Then there was the common people called plebeians. You hear that yet in college, they're called somebody a pleb. Well, that's just an old way of saying he's just a common fellow.

And these plebeians were second-class citizens, and then they had the third-class citizens, and they were slaves, and they might belong to anybody. These slaves, they owned nothing and could own nothing. They belonged to somebody, and that somebody was responsible for them.

And when they got converted, naturally they felt, well, I'm equal to the man who owns me. Why should I look up to him? And Paul rebuked them sharply and said, humble yourself and live your life right. Well, anyway, Paul was a freeborn Roman citizen.

Remember when the Romans said, with a great price obtained I this freedom, and Paul said, but I was freeborn. I've always thought Paul said that with his chest up and his head back. I was freeborn, he said.

I'm not a slave and wasn't born a slave. I was born a plebeian, not a patrician, not the high class, but I was born a free citizen of Rome. And yet, though he were a freeborn Roman citizen and could go where he pleased, and when he got in trouble could appeal unto Caesar, which a slave could never have done, yet he declared himself a slave for Christ's sake and of Christ.

And using the word in its setting that it had there, what he said to Titus was, I am Paul, I am a servant of Jesus Christ. Christ owns me by purchase. That's how they got slaves, inheritance or purchase.

He owns me and he feeds me and he keeps me and he's responsible for me before the law. And I work in Christ's service and my service is voluntary and inexpressibly delightful. For while Paul called himself a servant or a slave of Jesus Christ, he never allowed it to have the connotation of bondage.

He always meant the opposite. He was a voluntary servant and happy to serve the master whose service was freedom. If he had been a servant of sin, he would have been bound.

Let's illustrate it like this. Take such a country as Russia or any of the totalitarian states that own the souls of their citizens. So in Italy once under Mussolini before he got hanged up by the heels.

It was so with Hitler before he lit out and hasn't been seen. And it's so in Russia. Well, whoever is there is a slave.

That is, there's a certain bondage. He's got to be careful. He can't talk.

He's got to believe what he's told. He's got to work with it, tell him. He can't quit jobs without permission.

He is a servant there. But in the United States, the humblest happy tramp sitting in Grant Park every June evening on a bench asleep is a freer man than the freest Russian. You see, it all depends on what realm you're in, what kingdom you're in.

And the freest Roman citizen, the patrician, who could be elected to the Senate and could wear his long robes and make his speeches, he was a bondsman because he lived in sin. But St. Paul was a voluntary

servant in a kingdom where there are no chains and where there is no slavery. And yet he said, I voluntarily declare myself a happy slave of Jesus Christ.

I'm attached to him. I'm a servant of his. I belong to him.

And he found more complete freedom in his happy servitude to Christ than he could ever have felt if he had not been a servant of Christ but had been free to sin and free to go and do as he pleased. Well, he said, I'm not only a servant of Christ, but I'm a servant for a purpose. I'm an apostle, which means a sent messenger.

And I am a sent one. He served the Lord Jesus as a messenger to bring God's elect to the knowledge of the truth. Now, that first verse here, Paul, a servant of God and apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, I've looked into, I guess, ten versions this last week.

And it says, and they agree that what he said was this, that for the promotion of the faith among the elect of God, that's what he's an apostle for. He said, I'm an apostle to promote the faith and get the message to those whom he called the elect of God. Now, God's elect, what about this? God's elect, shall we pass this over and act as if it wasn't here and look over and keep still and hope it'll go away? I refuse to do it.

I don't follow along with all that's taught about election, but I don't skip the word. It's here, and it means a divine choice. And the New Testament teaches the doctrine of election.

But I don't understand it. Sometime we'll understand it, or we'll understand that we cannot understand it. In either case, we'll be relaxed and feel at home.

In that great day when the Lord gives us a body like unto his glorious body, and gives us a brain in keeping with that glorious body, and a mind in keeping with that glorified brain, we'll either understand the doctrine of election, or we will understand that we can't understand. And you know the learned man is not necessarily the man who understands a thing. He's the man possibly who understands that he can't understand it.

That's what I tell schools and colleges when I have occasion to talk to them, that the best any college can do for anybody is to show him how much he can't know. And the most learned person is the one who knows more things that he'll never know than the other fellow who knows less things that he'll never know. You understand what I mean, and I think I'm right in that.

Not quite? Don't get that? Well, the rest of them did. Well, you see, if I can know, if I can know 30 things, and then I can know that there are 70 things that I can never know, why, the fact that I know that there are 70 things that can never be known makes me learn it just as certainly as knowing the 30 things that can. So when a young student comes out from college, he ought to come out clutching under his arm that little scroll that says that he knows a few things.

Then under the other arm, he ought to have another scroll whereon and wherein is listed the things that he find out he didn't know and probably never will be able to. And thus I think we turn out some learned men. But our problem is we turn out students who, because they know a few things, think they know all things.

Well, sometime we're going to understand. You know the little colored song that they sing at the camp meetings? By and by, when the morning comes, all the saints of God are gathered home. We'll tell the story how we've overcome and we'll understand it better by and by.

I wouldn't mind hearing that again sometime. Isaac Watts didn't write it, but there's a lot of truth in it. We understand it better by and by.

Or we'll understand that we can't understand. And then we'll throw our hands up and say, Oh Lord, God thou knowest. But the difficulty is to take a young student and teach him the doctrine of election and then he goes out and tries to cram it down everybody else's throat.

A man called me the other day on the phone, a very nice, courteous young man. He may even be here this morning. He said, I'm so-and-so.

And I said, hello. And he said, well, I've been saved five years. Or maybe it was only two years, just a brief time.

And he said, I've come to your church some. But he said, I don't agree with you on some things. And I said, why? Well, he said, I believe in election and predestination.

And I said, why? So do I. And I don't know how I took that. But I said to him, son, here you've been a Christian. He said he was 23.

And I said to him, son, here you've been a Christian. It was two or whatever it was, two years. And you're asking me to settle over the telephone a theological problem so profound that the greatest minds of the centuries have stood in reverence and gazed into its far heights and down into its profound depths and didn't understand it.

You can't understand it. Maybe never will be able to. But I'll tell you two things now that you can understand.

Take these and you're all right. One is, only the elect will come. For Jesus said, no man can come to me except the Father draw him.

He said, ye have listened and heard of the Father and all that hear of the Father come to me and I give them eternal life and I'll not cast them out. So only the elect will come, but anyone who will come can come. Now hear that.

You have those two things and then you're not going to make either mistake. You're not going to deny it and you're not going to go off the deep end and drown. Here are the two facts.

Only the elect will come, but whoever will come can come. With his usual flair for succinct, little concise gems of theology, though he was not known as a theologian, D.L. Moody settled that whole election question. They were discussing the non-elect and the elect in his day and he settled it like this.

He says, the elect are the whosoever wills and the non-elect are the whosoever won'ts. So the non-elect are the whosoever won'ts and whosoever won't he's not in, but whosoever will he can come. So you can go and give a bonafide message of truth to everybody in the world and say, if you will come you'll be saved and if they will come they'll be saved.

Well, then there's the truth which is after godliness and actually this is the burning heart of the message here. This is the burning core of the message that God through Paul gives to Titus which he is to give to the cretins who are always liars and evil beasts and slow bellies and they need some help. So he said this truth is after godliness.

Now the truth of Christ acts not only to rescue men but to purify and transform them. Now hear me, that the gospel of Jesus Christ works not only to rescue men. We have put the emphasis on the rescue all over the last years.

Everybody is the same. Come and be rescued. Well, the Bible doesn't put it there.

The Bible does say that the Lord will rescue us from perishing but he says we are saved unto purity and godliness. So the purpose of Titus was to teach that all those elect prove they were by living lives of holiness and godliness. And the man who sits and drinks beer and chews a cigar and argues election and who goes to church when he feels like it and lives a common life of Adam and yet he is arguing about predestination I wouldn't spend one minute with him.

Not one minute. Titus the Roman slave said if a man starts to talk to you and you see he has no sincerity in him turn your back on him. You can't talk to an insincere man.

The man who lives an evil life and then argues about election he doesn't have the faintest idea what the message of Christ is about. For the message of Christ is unto godliness. The message which is after godliness.

But don't forget friends the presence of the cretins is all around about us. Just as you'll get Asian flu if you get on a bus and you're surrounded by people that have it and they say it's highly contagious. I've never yet had the moral courage when I got on the bus and somebody behind me got to wheezing never yet had the moral courage to get up and leave.

Have you? Never had it. I'd rather get the flu than to hurt the fellow. So I'd sit there for 20 blocks while he blew, wheezed and snorted and I was afraid I'd got it by the grace of god I haven't up to now.

But all around about you there's the doctrine of the cretins. The cretins are always liars. The Americans are always liars.

Slow bellies, evil beasts. They always live like animals and they will live like animals and if you're not a converted Christian and don't have the grace of god in your heart why you'll be influenced by them. Let me say to you young people particularly you young Christians hear this man when I say to you in god's name keep separated from the cretins for they're all around about you.

They vote Republican or Democratic or else don't vote which is more like us. We may be black or white or red or yellow and we may be drive a big car or a little one but they're cretins gentlemen all around about us. The Christians are a minority group surrounded by cretins and Paul said look out for these cretins and warn them and rebuke them sharply in order that they might be sound in the faith and live the right kind of lives.

So I tell you young people if you think it's cute and funny to put on jive records you're giving the cretins a chance to blow terms into your soul. If you think it's cute to tell the off-color stories that circulated high school you're surrendering to the cretins who are always liars and evil beasts and slow bellies. And the whole level of the American morals is low.

They think low and everything is low and if you young people want to live for Christ you're going to have to sternly turn your back on all the cretins and say no I'll go with Christians I'll go along with Christians I'll live with Christians. My people are Christian people I walk not with the ungodly. My people are Christian

people.

Well, I would close with this according to the New Testament if there is not some degree of transformation and purification there is no guarantee of salvation. No matter how many times you've renewed your consecration no matter how many cards you've signed and how many revival meetings no matter how many times you have thought you were accepting Christ if there is not a good degree of transformation and purification there is no guarantee of salvation. For the salvation that truly saves also transforms and purifies.

This is the essence of Paul's letter to Titus that he might tell these Cretans Could Crete be any worse than Chicago I ask you? Could it? Could it be any worse than Chicago? No. Historians say Crete was a bad mixture of evil races and evil religions. But could it be any worse than Chicago? No.

God help you kids in school wherever you are from the 6th grade on up or in college because the whole influence is away from righteousness. You've got to turn hard to God and pray and believe in Him and stay close to the people that know God. Let the vims put their arms around you and keep you.

A man said to me the other day this penetrating thing he said there are some people that won't let you help them. He said there are certain people I've tried to help I've tried to put my arms around them give them, expose them to the truth and throw around them a fellowship that would help them in a world like this but they simply hold you at arm's length they won't let you help them. And you're going to have to humble yourself and let yourself be helped.

Get with the people of God. Get into the prayer meetings and young people's meetings and church meetings and see to it that you'll allow yourself to be helped because you can be sure of one thing the cretins are out to get you they're after you everywhere and if you refuse to be helped by the children of God then you'll be dragged down by the cretins which may God forbid.

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