

Day 182, Titus 1

by David Servant

David Servant explores Paul's letter to Titus, emphasizing the qualifications for church leaders and the dangers of false teachings.

Scripture: Titus 1:1-2, Titus 1:5, Titus 1:9-10

Topics: "Church Leadership", "False Teachings"

Description

David Servant preaches on Paul's letter to Titus, written after his trial before Nero, emphasizing the importance of choosing to repent and believe in Jesus rather than the Calvinist belief of pre-selection. Paul outlines the requirements for elders/overseers/pastors, stressing the need for moral integrity, the ability to refute false teachings, and the avoidance of dissipation and pugnacious behavior. False teachers were infiltrating the church in Crete, causing disruption and leading people astray, prompting Paul to urge Titus to silence them and reprove those who accept false teachings.

Transcript

It is thought that this letter was written some time after Paul's trial before Nero and his subsequent acquittal, perhaps around AD 66, which would place it after the final chapter of Acts. Paul obviously continued traveling and ministering just as before his imprisonment, and after planting churches in Crete with Titus' help, Paul left him behind to set things in order (1:5). Titus was a long-time, trusted co-worker of Paul's, a Greek man, first mentioned as being with Paul when he journeyed to Jerusalem to submit his gospel to the scrutiny of Peter, James and John (Gal. 2:1-3).

In his very first sentence, Paul declared himself to be "an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God" (1:1). God has chosen to save people who repent and believe in Jesus, yet some would have us believe that He chooses to save people who would never, under any circumstances, repent or believe in Jesus, but whom He zaps against their wills and changes. They go from hating Him to loving Him, not because of yielding their free will under the influence of His drawing (a universal drawing which others resist), but solely because of His sovereign action that is directed only at the few whom He has pre-selected. As you realize by now, this is not what Scripture teaches. If it were true, it would make God unjust. If ten men were on death row for the same crimes, and the state chose to forgive and release one but not the others, they would rightfully accuse the state of injustice. That is what Calvinists claim God does.

Is there anything God cannot do? Yes! He cannot lie (1:2). He also cannot be tempted with evil, change, or deny Himself (Jas. 1:13; Mal. 3:6; 2 Tim. 2:13). I would be willing to bet that there are other things that He can't do as well. Can He create another God equal to Himself? No, any created God could not be equal to Him, since He is not created! Can He foreknow the future final scores of football games that are never played? No, because there is nothing to foreknow.

Similarly to what he wrote in 1 Timothy, Paul lists the requirements for elders in today's reading. Note that Paul uses the words elder (Greek: presbuteros) and overseer (Greek: episkopos) synonymously (1:5, 7). They identify the same ministry. Paul never mentioned pastors in either Titus or 1 Timothy, yet he told the elders (Acts 20:17) of Ephesus, whom he also called overseers (20:28) to "shepherd the church of God" (20:28). The Greek word translated "shepherd" there is poimaino, which is the verb form of the noun poimen, which is translated "pastor" only in Ephesians 4:11 and "shepherd" everywhere else it is found in the New Testament. For this reason, among others, it is safe to assume that pastors, elders and overseers are all the same. Thus we could say that Paul listed the requirements to be a pastor in Titus 1:6-9.

One requirement is that an elder/overseer/pastor not be "accused of dissipation," which is defined as "a descent into drunkenness and sexual immorality." Dissipation not only disqualifies one from being a leader of Christians, but also from being a Christian.

Elders/overseers/pastors must also not be "pugnacious," which is defined as "being eager to argue, quarrel or fight." Being pugnacious does not mean, however, that one is not eager to discuss true doctrine and expose what is false, as another requirement for church leaders is that they be able to "refute those who contradict" sound doctrine (1:9). Paul also instructed Titus to "severely reprove" those who accept false teaching (1:13).

False teachers were definitely making inroads into the young church in Crete. Paul refers to them as "rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers...who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain" (1:10-11). One false teacher, however, Paul agreed with at least in part, whom he quoted as saying, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." Paul elevated a well-known Cretan named Epimenides from poet to prophet for his accurate assessment of Cretan character!

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