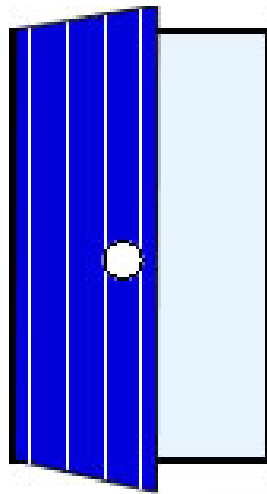


BIBLE STUDIES



Mill Lane Chapel

Titus

2) “God that cannot lie”

Read Chapter 1: 1-4

In introducing our studies in the Epistle to Titus, we noticed that there are three leading themes in the letter:

i) That it was written in view of the danger from religious teachers who, following the character of the islanders, were unsound in speech (1: 10-11), thought (1: 15), and act (1: 16). It has been said that they were unsound in what they ‘taught, thought and wrought’.

ii) That true believers are saved people who can say “God our Saviour” (1: 3; 2: 10; 3: 4), and “the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour” (1: 4; 2: 13; 3: 6). They are in benefit from “the love of **God** our Saviour” and enjoy “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the **Holy Ghost**, which he (God) shed on us abundantly through **Jesus Christ** our Saviour” (3: 4-6).

iii) That since Christians are saved people, they must be the very reverse of men and women around them in speech, thought, and action. That is, they must follow “sound doctrine” (2: 1) and use “sound speech” (2: 8); they must be “sober” (1: 8; 2: 4-5; 2: 6) and act “soberly” (2: 12); they must be characterised by “good works” (2: 7, 14; 3: 8, 14).

Titus Chapter 1 can be divided as follows: **(1)** the salutation of Paul (vv1-4); **(2)** the charge to Titus (vv5-9); **(3)** the circumstances in Crete (vv10-16)

1) THE SALUTATION OF PAUL

In his opening greeting, Paul refers to his relationship with God (vv1-3), and his relationship with Titus (v4). In connection with the former, he is “a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ”. In connection with the latter, Titus is his “own son after the common faith.” We must therefore notice **(A)** Paul’s service for God, and **(B)** Paul’s son in the faith.

A) Paul’s service for God, vv1-3

In these verses, Paul describes his calling: “a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ” (v1), and his ministry: “according to the faith of God’s elect...the truth which is after godliness...in hope of eternal life” (vv1-3). According to D.E.Hiebert (*Titus and Philemon*), ‘The name “Paul” is from the Latin *Paulus*, meaning *little*. His Hebrew name was “Saul” (meaning, ‘asked for’). As a Roman citizen, he probably carried both names from birth. As the apostle to the Gentiles he always uses his Gentile name in his epistles’. (See Acts 13: 9, 13).

a) His calling, v1a

“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ”. (This is the only place where Paul calls himself “a servant of God”. Elsewhere he uses the expression, “a servant of Jesus Christ” (Rom. 1: 1, Gal. 1: 10; Phil. 1: 1). This reminds us that we can only be authoritative as we are subject to authority. Compare Matt. 8: 5-13. The centurion said, “I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it”. Paul was therefore:

i) **“A servant”**. He was a bond-servant (*doulos*). The word is applicable to us all. It denotes the relationship with God which is common to every believer. See, for example, Rom. 6: 17-18, 22: “But God be thanked, that ye were the **servants** of sin...being then made free from sin, ye became the **servants** of righteousness...But now being made free from sin, and become **servants** to God”. Compare 1 Pet. 2: 16: “As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the **servants** of God”. This emphasises that Paul does not use the expression to denote involuntary servitude. As D.E.Hiebert observes, ‘no one ever becomes a successful servant of God until he chooses to make God’s will his own will’. As Christians, we have been bought with a great price, the precious blood of Christ (1 Cor. 6: 19-20; 1 Pet. 1: 18-19), hence we are not our own but belong to Him. This places an obligation upon us now to live for Him: “And that he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him, which died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor. 5: 15).

ii) **“An apostle”**. Paul does not always mention his apostleship (see Phil. 1: 1; 1 Thess. 1: 1; 2 Thess. 1: 1; Philemon 1), but when he does so, it is always for good reason. See, particularly, Gal. 1: 1, where the believers had been deceived by “another gospel” (Gal. 1: 6). It is appropriate in the Epistle to Titus. Paul lends apostolic weight to the work of Titus in dealing with false teaching. See, for example 1: 5; 1: 13; 2: 1; 2: 15; 3: 8.

Notice that he describes himself as “an apostle of Jesus Christ”. Not, as often, “Christ Jesus”. The reason for this could be that the epistle emphasises that salvation is by divine intervention. Hence the historical order, “Jesus Christ”, reminding us that having been “found in fashion as a man”, He has now been exalted and glorified.

“An apostle” therefore denotes Paul’s particular calling, reminding us that within our general calling as “servants” we all have particular work. Hence: “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation...” (Rom. 12: 6-8). We must remember that we are **all** gifted believers: “As **every man** hath received the gift (‘each according as he has received a gift’, JND), even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet. 4: 10).

b) His ministry, vv1-3

Paul now defines the sphere of his ministry. It is “according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (vv1-2).

It will not escape our notice that Paul tells us that his apostleship is *(i)* “according to the faith of God’s elect”: this takes our minds back to ***the past***; *(ii)* “and the acknowledging of the truth that is according to godliness”: this focuses our attention on ***the present***; *(iii)* “in hope of eternal life”: this projects our thoughts into ***the future***. The words, “in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began”, are a marvellous statement! It comprehends eternity, reaching forward - “in hope of eternal life”, and reaching back - “promised before the foundation of the world (‘before the ages of time’, JND).

The sense of “according to” is evidently ‘pertaining to’ or ‘in regard to’. Paul’s service concerned the faith, godliness, and hope of God’s people. The combination of “faith” and “godliness” is of immense importance. The RSV has, ‘to further the faith of God’s elect, and their knowledge of the truth which is according to piety’.

i) “The faith of God’s elect”

In the Old Testament there were priests who had “a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the ***law***” (Heb. 7: 5), and “that offer gifts according to the ***law***” (Heb. 8: 4). But Paul was not concerned with the requirements of the law. He was concerned with the “***faith*** of God’s elect...” The words, “according to (the) faith of God’s elect” (the definite article is omitted), have been interpreted in three ways:

- ***With reference to ‘the faith’***, that is, what is actually believed. Whilst the word “faith” can be used, by metonymy, in this way, this does seem unlikely here.

- ***With reference to the faith exercised by the elect in salvation.*** W.E.Vine evidently espouses this view: ‘what the apostle points out is that the object of his ministry was that through him those chosen of God should believe’. This is certainly true in 2 Tim. 2: 10, “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory”. See also Acts 18: 9-10, “Be not afraid. But speak, and hold not thy peace...for I have much people in this city”. Paul’s ministry was undoubtedly to present the gospel for acceptance by faith.

Following this interpretation, it could be said the words, “the faith of God’s elect” stand in direct opposition to the false teachers, “specially they of the circumcision...whose mouths must be stopped.” They taught that salvation was by faith plus works, particularly circumcision. But men are saved on the basis of faith alone, totally without law.

It has to be said, however, that this does not seem an altogether satisfactory explanation of the words, “an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect”. This brings us to the third way in which the words can be understood.

- *With reference to the strengthening of the faith of God’s elect.*

That is, Paul is referring here to his ministry towards the Lord’s people, and we have an example of this in 1Thessalonians. Having referred to their “election of God” (1: 4), Paul was deeply concerned about their faith: “we sent Timotheus...to establish you, and to comfort you concerning **your faith**...I sent to know **your faith**...Timotheus...brought us good tidings of **your faith**...we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by **your faith**...night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in **your faith**” (3: 2, 5, 6, 7, 10). Paul’s deep desire to strengthen “the faith of God’s” elect is very clear here!

This interpretation is supported by the fact that the expression “the faith of God’s elect” emphasises that Paul refers here to true believers, as opposed to false teachers. True believers can look back and rest, not on their personal merit, but in the free mercy of God who chose them “before the foundation of the world”. Their salvation is entirely divine. As D.E.Hiebert observes, the expression “God’s elect” ‘is intended as a comfort to the faithful, struggling man of God’. It imparts strength and stability. For further reading on the subject of election, see Eph.1: 4; 2 Thess. 2: 13; 2 Tim. 1: 9; 1 Pet. 1: 2.

ii) “The truth that is according to godliness”

Paul’s ministry was concerned not only with “the faith of God’s elect”, but also with “the acknowledging (the knowledge) of (the) truth that is after (according to) godliness”. W.E.Vine puts it as follows: ‘the truth which is according to godliness - that which is productive of godliness’. The word “godliness” is used particularly in the ‘pastoral’ epistles (1 Tim., 2 Tim., Titus). See, for example, 1 Tim. 3: 16; 4: 7-8; 6: 3; 6: 5-6; 2 Tim 3: 5. “The faith of God’s elect”, strengthened by the teaching of God’s word, will produce godliness of life. A profession of truth which allows an individual to live in ungodliness, is a spurious profession. The emphasis upon “truth that is according to godliness” occurs here in view of ungodliness amongst religious teachers. See 1: 6, “They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him...” The Lord’s people were to be characterised by “the things that become sound doctrine” (2: 1).

Election (“the faith of God’s elect”, or ‘elect ones’), rightly understood, issues in godliness. Note the balance here. Compare Eph. 2: 10, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them”; Eph. 1: 4, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him. In love having predestinated us...”; 2 Pet. 1: 10, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure”. That is, fulfil the purpose of that calling and election.

Thus Paul’s ministry concerned the strengthening of the spiritual life of God’s ‘elect ones’, and their consequent godliness of life. Compare 2 Tim.1: 9-11:

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an **holy** calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began”. But Paul has not finished! God’s elect have a marvellous future!

iii) “According to the hope of eternal life”

“In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the foundation of the world” (v2). For the “hope of eternal life”, see also 3: 7. It must be emphasised that “eternal life” is the present possession of every believer. It is not something that believers hope to obtain! But “eternal life” as defined by the Lord Jesus in John 17: 3 (“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent”) ‘embraces all that lies in the future when the believer is glorified’ (D.E.West, *What the Bible Teaches - Titus*).

The words, “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” are followed by the means by which that purpose is accomplished: so

- **The promise of God, v2.** “Which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began”. Note the contrast between the statement, “God, that cannot lie”, and the statement, “The Cretians are always liars” (v12). The words, “God, that cannot lie” stress His absolute veracity. His purpose ‘before the ages of time’ cannot be frustrated in any way. It is absolutely secure. We could have no assurance at all if God could lie!

It is possible that Paul alludes here to 1 Sam. 15: 29, “And also the Strength of Israel (God is the guarantor of His own purposes) will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent.” See also Num. 23: 19, “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”; Heb. 6: 18, “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us”; James 1: 17: He is “the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning”; Rom. 3: 3-4, “For what, if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written (Psalm 51: 4), That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged”.

The Lord Jesus is “the way, the **truth**, and the life” (John 14: 6). He describes the devil as “a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8: 44).

God’s promises, every one of them, are secured in Christ, for “all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen” (2 Cor. 1: 20).

- **The word of God, v3.** “But hath in due times manifested his word (*logos*) through preaching”. The word “manifested” (*phaneroo*) means ‘made visible’. We should notice that Paul does not say ‘hath in due times

manifested eternal life' but "manifested his word". The promise is embodied in His word, and that is conveyed by preaching. This emphasises the vital importance of preaching the word of God. The Lord Jesus prayed, not only for "the men which thou gavest me out of the world", but for "them also which shall believe on me through their **word**" (John 17: 6, 20).

We must notice that it is "in due times" or 'in its own due season' (JND). God is in absolute control of circumstances. Compare Gal. 4: 4, "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son"; 1 Tim. 2: 6, "who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time", that is, 'the testimony to be borne in its own times'.

- **The servants of God, v3.** God hath in due times manifested his word through preaching which is committed ('entrusted') **unto me** according to the commandment of God our Saviour". The wonder of this! Paul expressed the same sense of wonder over this in Eph. 3: 8, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ".

The word "preaching" here (*kerugma* akin to *kerusso*) refers to 'a proclamation by a herald, a preaching - the substance of what is preached as distinct from the act of preaching' (W.E.Vine). A herald was required to convey the message committed to him by a higher authority, with clarity and integrity. Nothing less is expected of God's servants! Paul's service was not optional. It was "according to the commandment of God our Saviour". God's will is not a series of options: it is a series of commandments. We do not please ourselves. Our object should be to obey and please Him. He commands His servants. Paul never forgot his divine commission as a messenger of the Gospel. He was "separated unto the gospel of God" (Rom. 1: 1). He said, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (1 Cor. 9: 16). D.E.Hiebert is so right in saying, 'How God's servants need this sense of inescapable responsibility today!'

We should notice that the balance of the chapter adds a further dimension to this, and it is mentioned at this juncture only for completeness. Preaching leads to the planting of churches. See vv5-9. Thus we have: **(a)** the eternal purpose of God; **(b)** the unveiling of that purpose through His word; **(c)** the communication of His word by preaching; **(d)** the establishing of local churches. This should be the purpose of every evangelist.

B) Paul's son in the faith, v4

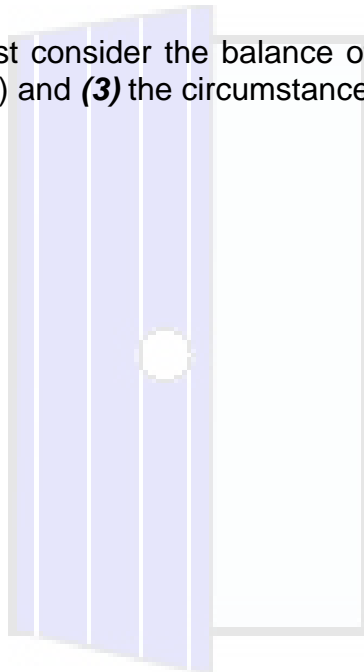
"To Titus, mine own (*gnesios* meaning 'true') son (*teknon*, meaning 'child') after the common faith", or 'to Titus, my own child according to (the) faith common (to us)' (JND). The RV has 'my true child'. The word "child" ('son', AV) indicates dearness: it is a diminutive of affection. This indicates that Paul was instrumental in the conversion of Titus, and emphasises his genuine Christian faith. The name of Titus does not occur in the book of Acts. He is mentioned thirteen times by name in Paul's epistles, and nine of these occurrences are found in 2 Corinthians, where the references emphasise the high esteem in which he was held by the apostle. See, for example, 2 Cor. 2:

13; 8: 23; 12: 18. Our last glimpse of Titus is found in 2 Tim. 4: 10: "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia".

The words "after the common faith" are appropriate. A Jew is writing to a Gentile. See Gal. 2: 1-3, "Titus...being a Greek". Hence the expression "common faith". "Common" translates *koinos*. The word occurs in Jude 3, "the common salvation".

"Grace mercy and peace". The RV has only 'grace and peace'. We should notice the order. It is "grace...peace". We could never have the latter without the former. Grace is what He brought (Titus 2: 11), and peace is what He left (John 14: 27). It is usually said that "grace" and "peace" represent the characteristic Greek and Hebrew greetings respectively. We should also notice the joint source: "from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour". The RV has 'From God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour'. The equality of the Lord Jesus with the Father, and therefore His absolute deity, is taught here.

In our next study we must consider the balance of the chapter, covering **(2)** the charge to Titus (vv5-9) and **(3)** the circumstances in Crete (vv10-16).



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