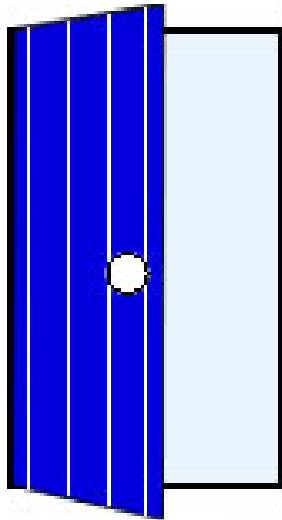


BIBLE STUDIES



Mill Lane Chapel

Titus

8) **“Be careful to maintain good works”**

Read Chapter 3: 8-15

As we have noticed, Chapter 3 may be divided into three paragraphs: **(1)** the reason for good works” (vv1-7); **(2)** the benefit of good works (vv8-11); **(3)** the fellowship through good works (vv12-15). In each paragraph, the sphere of “good works” differs.

- In vv1-7, it is “good works” in relation to **society**: “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates...to speak evil of no man” (vv1-2).

- In vv8-11, it is “good works” in relation to **testimony**: “These things are good and profitable unto men” (v8).

- In vv12-15, it is “good works” in relation to **hospitality**: “Bring Zenas...and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them. And let our’s also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses...” (vv13-14).

1) THE REASON FOR GOOD WORKS, vv1-7

In our previous study, we noted that this section falls into three sections: **(a)** our present behaviour, with its seven virtues (vv1-2); **(b)** our past behaviour with its seven vices (v3); **(c)** the power that changed our behaviour (vv4-7): this is summed up in the simple but profound statement, “He saved us” (v5). Our salvation is attributable to the Godhead: “God our Saviour” (v4); “renewing of the Holy Ghost” (v5); “Jesus Christ our Saviour” (v6).

2) THE BENEFIT OF GOOD WORKS, vv8-11

As we have noted, there is a particular emphasis here on “good works” in connection with our testimony in the world: “These things are good and profitable unto **men**” (v8). The benefit of good works in this way is brought out by contrast. See vv8-9: “be careful to **maintain** good works...but **avoid** foolish questions...for they are unprofitable and vain.” Paul now tells Titus **(a)** what he is to affirm (v8), and **(b)** what he is to avoid (v9) how he is to act (vv10-11). It is always worth remembering that the best bulwark against wrong practices is to maintain good practices!

a) What Titus was to affirm, v8

The section begins with an exhortation to Titus. “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men”. 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”.

The words, “**This** is a faithful saying, and **these things** I will that thou affirm constantly” refer to the sublime truth stated in vv4-7. As we are about to see, these great doctrinal statements have a practical bearing on our conduct, but we must first notice two important points:

i) Paul’s complete confidence in God’s word. “This is a faithful saying...” The expression, “faithful saying”, occurring several times in the so-called ‘Pastoral Epistles’ (the Epistles to Timothy and Titus), means something reliable and trustworthy. See also 1 Tim 1: 15, with reference to the gospel; 1 Tim 3: 1, with reference to overseers (A.V. ‘bishops’); 1 Tim. 4: 9, with reference to godliness; 2 Tim. 2: 11, with reference to reward.

ii) Titus’ complete confidence in teaching others. “And these things I will that thou affirm constantly”. The words “affirm constantly” translate one Greek word (*diabebaioomai*). JND has, ‘I desire that thou insist strenuously’, and the RV has, ‘I will that thou affirm confidently’ The word also occurs in 1 Tim. 1: 7.

Whilst self-confidence is certainly not recommended (!), we can have every confidence in the word of God, and therefore proclaim it with assurance and conviction. In particular, Titus was to ‘insist strenuously’ that “they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works” or, ‘may take care to pay diligent attention to good works’ (JND). Quite obviously, Paul does not mean “good works” for salvation here: see v5 above. But, as D.E.Hiebert rightly says, ‘Right beliefs must exhibit their fruits in life...It is the logical result of a true apprehension of the grace of God’. Bible doctrine is intensely practical! Rightly understood, sound doctrine will produce sound lives and, as Paul now points out, this is an essential part of our testimony to others: “These things are good and profitable (of assistance, beneficial, advantageous) to men”. Notice “to men”. That is, to men in general. In this connection, we must note with 2: 11, “to all men”; 3: 4, “toward man”. Compare Gal. 6: 10, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”.

b) What Titus was to avoid, v9

The contrast is clear. We have already noticed what is “profitable unto men”. These things were to be carefully maintained. Now we must notice what is unprofitable, and to be avoided or shunned. We are to “avoid (*periistemi*, literally, ‘to turn oneself about for the purpose of avoiding something; to shun’):

i) “Foolish questions”. The word “foolish” (*moros*) comes from a root (*mu*) meaning ‘to be silly’ (W.E.Vine). Compare 2 Tim. 2: 23, “But foolish (*moros*) and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes”. Paul is certainly not referring here to sober and serious questions from believers who wish to know more about Bible teaching but, bearing in mind the influence of Jewish teachers in Crete (see 1: 14), to the endless questions arising from rabbinical law. We have an example in Mark 7: 1-13.

ii) “Genealogies”. Compare 1 Tim 1: 4, “Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith...” If you Anglicise the Greek word for “fables” here (*muthos*), you get ‘myths’. This possibly refers to the Apocryphal writings. The “endless genealogies” refers to the Jewish family trees which are found in the books of Philo, Josephus and the Book of Jubilee, by which the Jews traced their descent from the patriarchs and their families’ (W.E.Vine). Sadly, people still prefer to be occupied with “questions” - that is, with speculation, imagination and human reasoning - rather than with the certainty of the word of God. The religious world excels at it!

iii) “Contentions”. This refers to the result of “foolish questions” and speculation over “genealogies”. The word (*eris*) means ‘strife, quarrel, especially rivalry, contention wrangling’ (W.E.Vine). He adds ‘as in the church at Corinth’. See 1 Cor. 1: 11: “there are contentions (*eris*) among you...”

iv) “Strivings about the law”. Literally, ‘fightings about the law’. Yet another result of the “foolish questions” above.

D.E.West sums up and applies Paul’s teaching here as follows: ‘Let us bear in mind that disagreements and arguments invariably begin with error, and not with truth. Frivolous and controversial questions, and discussions on intricate and trifling points, are unprofitable and futile. Whilst gospel truths are “good and profitable” (v8) , legal squabbles are “unprofitable (*anopheles*) and vain (*mataos*): they are not beneficial and are void of producing worthwhile results; hence they are unworthy of time and serious consideration’.

c) How Titus was to act, vv10-11

As we have noted, the words “unto men” (v8) strongly suggest that Paul has in view our testimony in the world. It will be commended by “good works”, and endangered by “foolish questions...genealogies...contentions...strivings about the law”. Therefore any who persist in these things are to be reprov'd or reprimanded (AV “admonished”) and if that fails, they are to be refused fellowship. So: “A man that is an heretic (*hairetikos*: ‘a heretical man’, JND), after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself”.

The word ‘heretical’ describes ‘a person who is quarrelsome and stirs up factions through erroneous opinions: a man who is determined to go his own way and so forms parties and factions. His self-chosen opinions are those described in verse 9’ (D.E.Hiebert). D.E.West points out that the word does not necessarily signify a man holding false doctrine...He is a person who is more concerned about gathering some adherents to himself and maintaining some sectarian line of truth and, in so doing, cause strife, faction and division in the assembly’.

In these circumstances, the person in question was to be reprimanded twice (hasty and peremptory action was to be avoided) with a view to reclaiming him. The word ‘admonition’ means, literally ‘a putting in mind’ (W.E.Vine) and carries here the idea of warning. If this fails, Titus was ‘to “reject” him, have nothing to do with him, refuse to be bothered with him’ (D.E.Hiebert). The word “reject” (*paraiteoma*) means ‘refuse’, and is rendered in this way in 1 Tim. 4: 7; 5: 11. The idea is not so much avoidance, as in the RV margin, but refusal of fellowship: ‘have nothing to do with’. D.E.West points out that this would ‘certainly mean imposing restraints as far as his active and public participation in the assembly meetings is concerned. There is no suggestion here of him being put away from the fellowship of the assembly, since false doctrine opposed to fundamental truth is not in question’. The situation described in 1 Cor. 5: 1-13 and 1 Tim 1: 19-20 is totally different, and exclusion from fellowship in these cases is mandatory. It should be added that should the “man that is an heretic” persist in his activities, the assembly might be obliged to consider withdrawing from him entirely in the interests of preserving unity amongst the Lord’s people. Refusal to listen to the two ‘admonitions’ (v10) discloses two things about the man:

i) **His character.** “Knowing that he that is such is subverted...” The word “knowing” (*oida*) means to know by observation. So there is no doubt about the matter. He is “subverted”, better ‘perverted’ (RV/JND: “*ekstrepho*), meaning ‘changed entirely’ (W.E.Vine) or ‘twisted, turned out of the right way’ (D.E.Hiebert).

ii) **His conduct.** “Sinneth, being condemned of himself”. That is, he goes on sinning both by his heretical behaviour and by his refusal to listen to admonition.

This leaves him guilty: “being “condemned of himself” or ‘self-condemned’. ‘He may not be conscious of his condemnation, but by his actions he unconsciously passes adverse judgment upon himself’ (D.E.Hiebert).

This is obviously a very serious matter, and the action described is fully justified in view of the necessity to maintain a good testimony in the world. This must always be safeguarded. Internal disruption in an assembly soon leaks out.

3) FELLOWSHIP THROUGH GOOD WORKS, vv12-15

In these verses, the expression “good works” (v14) is applied to daily work, which puts believers in a position to provide for the Lord’s servants. See vv13-14, “Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them. And let our’s also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful”. Amplified Version reads: ‘And let our (own people really) learn to apply themselves to good deeds - to honest labour and honourable employment - so that they may be able to meet necessary demands whenever the occasion may require’. However, while the immediate context suggests provision for servants of God travelling in His service, it would be unduly restrictive to limit this to those who are wholly occupied in preaching and teaching. These verses should therefore be read in conjunction with such passages as Acts 20: 35, “I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive”, and Eph. 4: 23, “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he have to give to him that needeth”. We should now notice: **(a)** the departure of Titus from Crete (v12); **(b)** the journey of Zenas and Apollos to Crete (v13); **(c)** the hospitality of the believers in Crete (v14).

a) The departure of Titus from Crete, v12

Very clearly, Paul did not visualise Titus remaining permanently in Crete. “When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis (meaning ‘city of victory’): for I have determined there to winter” (v12). We are told that there were three cities bearing the name Nicopolis, and that it is almost certain that Paul refers here to the commercial port on the coast of Epirus (south of the modern border between Greece and Albania). Paul’s expectation to pass the winter at Nicopolis is evidence of his release after house arrest at Rome (Acts 28: 16-31).

The two brethren make an interesting contrast. Of Artemas we know nothing, but Tychicus is quite well-known in the New Testament. See Acts 20: 4; Eph. 6: 21; 2 Tim 4: 12. In Col. 4: 7, he is described as “a beloved brother, and a faithful minister, and fellowservant in the Lord”. Whether unknown to us (like Artemas) or comparatively well-known (like Tychicus), every servant of God is well-known to

Him! Compare Phil. 4: 3. The words “be diligent” (v12) mean ‘to hasten to do a thing; to exert oneself’. Since Titus was not to leave until the arrival of Artemas or Tychicus, Paul evidently thought it necessary for the believers in Crete to have the ongoing help of visiting brethren. If Titus suddenly decided to leave before the arrival of Artemas and Tychicus, Paul would have had occasion to say to him, “with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?” (1 Sam. 17: 28). A word for shepherds here!

b) The journey of Zenas and Apollos to Crete, v13

Zenas and Apollos were evidently visiting Crete, and in all probability brought the letter from Paul.

i) Zenas. D.E.Hiebert points out that the description of Zenas ‘as “the lawyer” leaves it uncertain whether the designation is Jewish or Roman. ‘If the term is used with same meaning that it has in the Gospels, then he was a Jewish Christian who had been an expert in Jewish law, and the designation continued to be applied to him by his Christian friends’. In this case, Zenas would have been helpful in opposing the Jewish teachers in Crete. Hiebert continues: ‘Since his name is Greek (Zenas is derived from Zeus), it may well be that he was a practitioner of Roman law and was now using his abilities in the interest of the Gospel. If so, he is the only Christian lawyer mentioned in the Bible’.

ii) Apollos. He was learned in culture and in the scriptures. He is described as “a certain Jew...born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures...” (Acts 18: 24). He would certainly be a help in Crete! He was “eloquent” (*logios*, an adjective from *logos*, a word), meaning ‘learned’ (RV). The word meant, primarily, ‘a man skilled in literature and the arts’ (W.E.Vine). Vine adds, ‘he had stores of learning, and could use it convincingly’. But Apollos had even greater ability. He was “mighty (*dunatos*, meaning strong, powerful) in the scriptures”. He was certainly a blessing to God’s people at Corinth. See Acts 18: 27-28; 1 Cor. 3: 6.

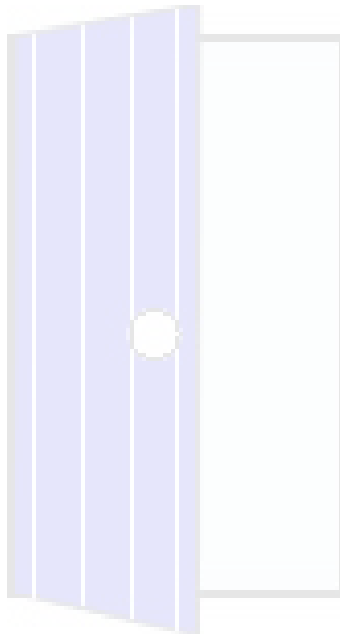
c) The hospitality of the believers in Crete , v14

“And let our’s also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful”. As we have already noted, “good works” here refers to daily work, and this enables us to do two things:

i) It puts us in a position to help others. The “necessary uses” (‘necessary wants’, JND) refers to ‘urgent necessities’ and can be rendered ‘so as to help in cases of urgent need’ (D.E.West). The Cretan believers were to share the responsibility of meeting the needs of God’s servants. As D.E.West observes, ‘This injunction needs to be heeded in a day when believers give so much of their time and energy to their own things, and seem indifferent not only to lost sinners, but also to needy saints’.

ii) It puts us in a position to exhibit spiritual fruit. “That they be not unfruitful”. In the first place, as above, others benefit. In the second, here, we benefit. In showing fellowship to others, we display our own spiritual development. Lack of concern for others is evidence of spiritual barrenness.

The epistle concludes with customary greetings and a benediction: “All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in (the) faith. Grace be with you all. Amen (v15). We should notice that Christian love is not a natural attribute: it is the result of faith in Christ. We should notice too that there is no exclusivism in Paul’s desire for the believers in Crete. “Grace be with you **all**”. As Justin Waldron observes, ‘What is evident from this chapter is that grace and good works go together!’



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