

# THROUGH THE BIBLE

## TITUS 1-3

Years ago Leslie Flynn wrote a book entitled, “**Great Church Fights.**” He documented cases of just how contentious and hostile church members can become.

Ask any pastor who’s been around the block a time or two, and he’ll tell you that **ministry is a contact sport!**

It’s sad when the Church becomes a cage fight.

Yet Titus, not just Leslie Flynn, could’ve written a book entitled, “**Great Church Fights.**” He was sent by Paul to pastor an ornery church on the island of Crete.

In describing the Cretans in 1:12, Paul quotes a local author who characterized his own people as, “**always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons...**” - not very flattering...

And Titus had been asked **to pastor** the Cretan church. Obviously, a church *full* of very cranky people.

Here’s the question that prompted Paul’s letter to Titus, “**how do you oversee rambunctious people?**”

The book of Titus expresses one certainty - **to deal with difficult people strong leadership is essential!**

In three chapters Paul condenses the instructions he communicated in his first letter to Timothy. He provides Titus *a crash course* in effective spiritual leadership...

Verse 1 is the author’s intro, “**Paul, a bondservant of God...**” Slavery in Israel was used to pay off a person’s debts. Often, a slave ended up serving a kind and benevolent master, and

lived a better life in his master's house than he could ever achieve on his own.

In response, sometimes these freed slaves would forego their liberty to remain in the master's household.

Exodus 21 tells us in such cases the slave would go to the door of his master's house, and before the city magistrates, a sharp awl was driven through the lobe of his ear. He was pinned to his master's door. And that pierced ear forever identified that person as a "love-slave," or as Paul puts it in verse 1, a "*bondservant*."

Paul considered himself a "*love-slave*" of Jesus.

At first he came to Christ because he owed the Lord an enormous debt he could never repay. But the longer he served the more he realized he could do far better in God's house than he ever could do on his own. Paul was pinned to the door of his kind, benevolent master.

*What about you? Are you a "bondservant of God"?*

Paul was also "*an apostle of Jesus Christ*." The word translated "*apostle*" means "*sent out one*." Paul was sent out by God to share the good news of Jesus.

*"According to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness..."*

The "*elect*" are the handpicked of God, but evidently they still need to have faith. Salvation is *God's choice and our choice*. You might wonder how that reconciles, but *the Bible* detects no contradiction.

And here, Paul defines what real faith looks like - it's a sincere and serious "*acknowledgment of the truth*" which

harmonizes with “*godliness.*” In essence, *faith that saves us is also the faith that changes us.* The NT knows nothing of *proclamation without transformation.*

Verse 2 tells us our faith is “*in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior...*”

Notice, here we’re told something God cannot do. *He cannot lie!* A study I recommend is to go through the Bible and create a list of all that God cannot do...

James 1:13, “*God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.*” 2 Timothy 2:13, “*(God) cannot deny Himself.*” He can’t violate His word.

There are some acts that God cannot do - *and one is to lie.* That’s why you can always take God’s Word to the bank! What God promises He is faithful to perform!

Paul addresses this letter, “*To Titus, a true son in our common faith: grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.*” As Paul did with Timothy, he refers to Titus as “*a son in the faith.*” Paul was a spiritual father to Titus - a mentor.

They had known each other for nearly 20 years.

Paul and Titus met on Paul’s first missionary trip to Galatia. Titus was a Gentile. And when Titus returned to Jerusalem with Paul and entered the Temple he became a flashpoint of controversy with the legalists.

The Jews tried to force Titus to be circumcised, but Paul refused to buckle. Paul knew that rituals and rules have nothing to do with a right standing with God.

God forgives us because of His grace! God accepted Titus through faith in Christ alone - and so did Paul!

Titus continued to minister with Paul over the years. Along with Timothy, Titus was a faithful troubleshooter. They were Paul's messengers among the churches.

Titus was with Paul after his appeal to Caesar Nero, on his voyage from Caesarea to Rome. When Paul's ship stopped off at the island of Crete, a little southeast of Greece, Titus stayed to minister to the church.

During Paul's second imprisonment we know that Titus joined Paul in Rome. For a time, he ministered in Dalmatia. **But eventually Titus returned to Crete.**

The church historian, Eusebius, tells us that Titus pastored the Cretan church into old age. Apparently, *it's possible to even grow fond of difficult people!*

Verse 5 reminds Titus of why he was dispatched to Crete, **"For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking."**

I'm sure you realize there are no perfect churches. *And if there was, please don't you join it - you'll ruin it!*

Every church has **"things that are lacking."** We all have our shortcomings and deficiencies. And it's the pastor's job to constantly be taking spiritual inventory.

When folks inform me of some deficiency in our church usually I'm one step ahead. I agree. I'm looking for chinks in

the armor. A pastor and elder's job is to *shore up our weaknesses as we build on our strengths.*

Verse 5 adds to Titus' job description. He's **"to appoint elders in every city as I commanded you..."**

In Acts 6 deacons were selected by the people of the church... But elders were always chosen by existing elders. Paul does this in Galatia in Acts 14:23.

And in the next few verses Paul lists the qualifications of a pastor / elder. You'll notice this list is similar to the list in 1 Timothy 3 - *proving that God's qualifications for leaders are the same in all churches.*

Timothy pastored in the urban city of Ephesus. Titus pastored on a remote, rural island called Crete. Yet leaders in both locales should be of *the same stuff!*

The qualifications begin in verse 6... **"If a man is blameless..."** In essence, there's nothing hanging over his head - no outstanding warrants for his arrest.

It's not that he's sinless - but he's *owned his errors, and made amends, and tried to repair the damage.*

He's also **"the husband of one wife,"** or literally, **"a one woman man."** He doesn't have eyes for sisters in the church. His heart and eyes are loyal to one woman.

**"Having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination..."** Not that his kids are perfect, but neither are they out-of-control, and running wild. He's not afraid to discipline his kids when they defy or rebel.

Verse 7, “**For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God...**” A church leader needs to realize that the church belongs to Jesus. We’re “**stewards**” - that is caretakers - custodians. *Each church is God’s Church!*

Once, a salesman came to town looking for the local *Church of God*. He asked a resident if he knew where the church was located. The man answered, “**Well, there’s a church on Main Street, but it belongs to a couple of rich cats that keep it afloat... There’s a church on Maple, but it belongs to a stubborn old grunt that runs the show... And the church down on Elm Street, but it belongs to the family that founded it... “No, I don’t think any of the churches around here belong to God.”**”

When an elder or a pastor acts as if they own the church there’s a huge problem. Church leadership exists to represent God and carry out His intentions...

The qualifications continue, “**not self-willed**” - no personal agendas... “**Not quick-tempered**” - church leaders need patience, since people require patience.

“**Not given to wine...**” As a believer it’s your liberty to drink alcohol - *as long as it doesn’t cause you or your brother to stumble...* But a leader should be willing to give up some legitimate rights for the greater good.

It’s a privilege to be a leader in the Body of Christ, but that privilege comes with responsibility. The men at the helm make important decisions at the spur of the moment - and they can’t afford a cloudy judgment.

Admittedly, opinions differ on whether the phrase, “*not given to wine*” requires *total abstinence* or *extreme caution* - but there’s no doubt it’s intended to limit the elders’ use of alcohol, and warn him of its dangers.

Here at CCSM we’ve chosen to embrace the spirit of this phrase, and we ask our pastors and elders to forego their liberty to drink, for the good of the church.

“*Not violent...*” You don’t want your elders’ meeting turning into a fist-to-cuffs... And since the elders handle the church finances - “*not greedy for money*” applies.

“*But hospitable...*” They should be willing to open their heart **and home** to newcomers. “*A lover of what is good, sober-minded* (or level-headed), *just* (or fair), (and) *holy...*” The term means “*reserved for God*”

Here’s how you spot *holiness...* It’s a man willing **to give stuff up** *to spend time with God, and be more accessible for service, and be a better witness!*

An elder should also be “*self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.*” A leader should be able and willing to confront the enemies of sound doctrine. Thus, he’s not afraid to go toe to toe with a problem child.

*Pastor Titus needed help.* A pastor can’t be the only one who takes a stand. He needs other men who are sound in their doctrine, and not afraid of confrontation.

Verse 10, “For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers...” Understand, there are two types of insubordination - **implicit** and **explicit**.

If you entertain criticism of the church, and say “*Oh, I’m just being a sounding board...*” without sounding back that the criticism you are hearing is wrong, or uninformed, or unfair - you’re giving *implicit* approval to what’s said. You’re becoming a party to the rebellion.

I’ve read, for a virus to remain in your body it has to have a host cell. It takes root in a cell that provides it shelter and nourishment - and from there it spreads.

The same is true with a bad attitude in the church. It too finds a host cell - a person or persons who may not totally agree with the attitude, but they tolerate it.

Without realizing it the host cell provides shelter and nourishment for the bad attitude to enlarge and spread. *Idle talkers* and *deceivers* are forms of insubordination.

Verse 10 tells us that the source of the problems in the Cretan church were coming “**especially (from) those of the circumcision...**” Jewish traditionalists and legalists were undermining God’s liberating grace.

Paul tells Titus boldly, verse 11, “**(their) mouths must be stopped.**” Leaders can’t be afraid of confrontation. These problems don’t just disappear on their own.

When a church member becomes contentious the men in charge need to *steer them back*, or *kick them out*. Difficult people have to be *disciplined* or *disciplined*. Paul says to Titus their “**mouths must be stopped.**”



For if allowed, the legalists will “subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.” If there’s no leader to stand up for *what’s right*, folks will come in and preach *what sells*. In the absence of strong leadership people with *the money motive* prey on the flock of God.

In verse 12 Paul shows his knowledge of the rowdy crowd Titus was trying to pastor. He writes, “One of them, a prophet of their own, said, (Here Paul quotes a fellow Cretan, the philosopher Epimenides) ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’”

And Paul agrees! “This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith...” The Cretans had a shameful reputation. They were antagonistic. They needed a sharp rebuke from their pastor. *Difficult people need strong leadership.*

It’s interesting that Paul both knew, and had read the Greek classics. Epimenides had written in 659 BC, 700 years earlier - and Paul was familiar with his work.

Obviously, Paul saw the value of educating himself in the culture and thought of the folks he wanted to reach.

Yet there’s a balance. Verse 14, Titus is “not (to give) heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.” Paul was aware of Epimenides’ writings, but didn’t take his cues from Greek philosophy or Jewish fable. He was true to God’s Word. He tells Titus to follow God’s truth, not human speculation.

Paul says in verse 15, “To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.” All too often we determine what’s right and wrong by how activities have been labeled by others.

The group says it’s “wrong” so we assume it must be wrong, *but labels don’t always work*. Right or wrong depends more on the heart of the person involved.

Take for example **a young man at the church swim night**. *Is it good or evil? It depends...* If his heart is full of love for God and for others it can be fun fellowship.

But if there’s lust in his heart, then hanging by the pool with girls in swimsuits can be an opportunity for evil. The point is, a pure heart keeps an activity pure, while an evil heart turns the same activity into something evil. **Good or evil depends on attitude.**

In verse 16 Paul warns of folks who “**profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.**”

Here’s the hypocrite - the poster child for difficult church members! He talks a good talk, but his actions speak so loud you can’t hear a word that he says.

In chapter 2 Paul writes, “**But as for you (Titus), speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience...**” In these next few verses Paul will exhort the Church to act like a family...

He points to four groups of people who make up every church, and gives instructions to each group...

First, **older men** need to be “*sober* (don’t show up at the OFC tipsy), *reverent* (take the things of God seriously), *temperate* (moderate in your habits), *sound in faith, in love, in patience...*” *Be an example...*

Verse 3 addresses “*the older women likewise...*”

*And BTW, how do you know you’re getting older? Here’s a list... “When you get out of the shower and you’re glad the mirror is fogged up... When you go for a haircut and the barber asks, ‘why?’... When you find TV ads for hemorrhoidal cream interesting... When the phrase ‘getting a little action’ means the prune juice is working...” And as you pick up items off the floor, you ask, “Anything else I can do while I’m down here?”*

Actually, older people are one of the greatest forces for good in the Church! They have wisdom, and free time, and experience that the rest of us can use.

The older believer may’ve retired from employment, but there’s no such thing as retirement from spiritual service. I’ve heard older folks comment, “*Well, I served when my kids were younger. Now it’s somebody else’s turn.*” That’s not a godly attitude. We should appreciate the older saints, and *they* should eagerly want to serve.

Paul tells Titus to exhort the **older women**, “*that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers...*” or gossips.

“Not given to much wine, teachers of good things - that they admonish the young women...” It’s the job of the *older women* to teach the *younger women*.

Too many churches set pastors up for failure by not taking Titus 2:2-3 seriously... When a pastor counsels a young lady on an ongoing basis dangerous dynamics are set in motion. An unhealthy attraction can develop.

This is why the older women - not pastors - should disciple the younger women. Our pastors will talk to a woman once - maybe twice - but if it’s going to be an ongoing counseling situation we’re going to refer that young lady to one of the older women in the fellowship.

And the older ladies need to teach the younger ladies, “to love their husbands, to love their children...”

When a woman first gets married she thinks both come naturally, but not so. Not when the husband gets old and fat, and the children become teenagers.

She’s got *to learn to love her family* - not simply as she wants to love them, but as they need to be loved!

The younger women also need “to be discreet” - “or appropriate” - in both their conduct and conversation.

*The younger woman need to learn when to take initiative, and when to wait on their husband... when to comment, and when to remain silent...* And “chaste” is also on Paul’s list. It means “purity in mind and heart.”

The younger women should also be taught to be “homemakers...” Once, a little boy was asked if his family said

a prayer before dinner? He replied, “Naw, we don’t have to, my mom is a really good cook.”

*Ladies, are you a good homemaker?* The Greek word means, “a keeper or guardian of the home.”

Paul wants to make sure the younger women order their lives in such a way that it puts them in position to manage the affairs of their family. No woman should be so busy that she puts her family on the back burner.

Of course, this doesn’t mean a woman can’t venture out of her home to earn some money for the family. No more than it means a husband - who’s primary duty is to provide for his family - can’t help his wife clean and manage the home. Marriage is certainly a team sport.

We learn in Proverbs 31 that the virtuous woman is both a mother and a successful business-person.

She’s industrious and ambitious, but her chief assignment is to manage a peaceful and orderly home.

Let’s all realize, *home* is the most important place on earth. **It’s where life makes up its mind.** It’s a family’s refuge from the world. A stable home makes for stable kids and a steady husband. A lady who neglects her home, and allows chaos to rule, is out of God’s will.

It’s the older Christian ladies who should teach the younger ladies to be “**good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.**” This may not be a popular observation, but it’s true: *when a lady refuses to submit to her husband’s leadership it casts a cloud over God’s Word.*

In marriage God assigns roles to both spouses that speak powerfully of His relationship with His people.

How thoroughly we've absorbed the Christian way of life is reflected in our attitude toward the biblical roles of husband and wife. Ladies, let me ask, *If little, green martians landed in your backyard, and said to your kids, "Take me to your leader?" Would they take them to mom or dad?* A godly wife let's her husband lead...

Verse 6 says, *"Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded"* - or *clear thinkers*. Men, if you want your wife to follow you and trust your decisions you can't be impulsive - hot-headed - driven by emotions.

You've got to be level-headed. Always aim carefully before you pull the trigger, and decide to take action.

The young man's list continues, *"in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works..."*

Young men need to develop a good track record. They'll later build on the strength of their reputation.

The pattern of good works they need to build should include... *"In doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you."*

The measure of a man's integrity is the gap between what he believes and how he actually lives. *Is that gap in your life broadening or shrinking?* Every man wants to be respected, but the wise man lives respectably.

Verse 9, “Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things...” And what was true of servants in Rome is true of employees today. Let the exemplary lifestyle begin at work!

“Not answering back...” Don’t be a smart-aleck, or insubordinate. Respect authority, don’t buck it...

Verse 10, “Not pilfering...” Statistics show American businesses lost \$13 billion to shoplifting last year...

But employee theft cost an astronomical \$50 billion. Pilfering cost us four times as much as thievery.

One out of eleven Americans is guilty of shoplifting. Three out of four have stolen from their employer.

Just because you’re not paid what you think you deserve doesn’t entitle you to self-appointed perks and favors. *Taking what doesn’t belong to you is stealing.*

Instead employees should “show all good fidelity...” They should be honest and trustworthy. “That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.”

I love this idea, that we can “*adorn the doctrine*” of God’s truth. We can give the Gospel color, and beauty, and pizzazz by living lives transformed by Jesus.

Verses 11-14 are powerful verses, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men...”

Like a surprise, God’s grace appeared suddenly. We were drowning in sin, and grace is the first responder.

There's an African proverb that highlights God's grace. **We're like a turtle on top of a fence post.**

A turtle can't climb up a post. There's no way it can jump or fly to the top of a fence post. The only way you'll see a turtle on top of a fence post is if someone reaches down, picks up that turtle, and does for it what it can never do for itself. **Someone else has to put it there.** And that describes our salvation. God in Christ has done for us what we could never do ourselves.

Grace goes against our human grain. From an early age, in most arenas, we're measured by how we perform. But grace makes God's favor free of charge.

And once we receive God's grace, it becomes our teacher... Paul writes of **Professor Grace**, "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works." *What's the intent of God's extravagant grace?* To make for Him a special people - distinct from the world - zealous for goodness.

Always looking and longing for the coming of Jesus.

Grace should change everything about us! *How we live, and where we look, and who we serve.*

In verse 15, Paul tells Titus to be bold and brave - to have some backbone - "Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you."



Chapter 3 reminds us that though God wants us distinct from the world, we still have an obligation to it.

We're citizens of two kingdoms - the *Kingdom of God* and the *kingdom of men*. And it's our job to obey both *the laws of the Lord* and *the laws of the land*.

Paul tells Titus, “**Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities...**” A lack of submission to government officials has the same effect as a wife's unwillingness to follow her husband. **It undermines the gospel.**

How can we expect our friends to submit to an authority they can't see - God in Heaven - if Christians won't submit to the human authorities we can see?

Remind the Church, “**to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one...**” The fellowship of the Body of Christ should be a **gossip-free zone**.

We need to also “**be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.**” It's hard to get the big-head if we remember **what we were** before we came to Christ.

In light of the rap sheet Christ expunged, let's walk in humility and show the same patience we were shown.

Verse 4 “**But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us..**” Again, we enjoy the kindness and love of our Savior, due to *His mercy* not *our merit*.

Once, a former basketball star from St. John's University died. At the pearly gate he was asked if he'd done anything that might exclude him from heaven.

He confessed, "Once in a game I took a shot at the buzzer, the ball went in, and St. John's won - but I was looking right at the clock and I saw triple zeroes before I shot the ball. Rather than tell the truth I just kept my mouth shut, and we won a game we should've lost."

The gatekeeper responded, "*Ah, no big deal. Come on in.*" The player said, "*Wow, thanks St. Peter.*" The gatekeeper replied, "*I'm not St. Peter, I'm St. John.*"

The truth is, it's not good works that save me - and it's not my evil deeds that exclude me. Salvation is determined by faith in the love of our Savior Jesus!

Notice too, verse 5, God saved us "through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior..." Here's what saves - not what we do, but *what Jesus did for us* and *what the Spirit does in us*. Jesus paid for our spiritual renewal.

When my boys were little they'd come home so dirty, Kathy wouldn't let them in the house. She made them strip naked, and she'd squirt them down with the hose.

You can pull a little boy out of the mud, and wash him off, *but that doesn't alter his desire to get dirty.*

Most folks don't appreciate the miracle of the new birth. The Spirit hoses off all the dirt, but that's just the beginning. He

also births in us new life. He cuts out the old nature, and implants within us the nature of Jesus.

As a Christian I'm not only cleansed, **I no longer want to get dirty...** And when I do, I'm quick to repent.

Verse 7 continues, **“that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”** To be **“justified”** means God treats me *just-as-if-I'd* never sinned even when I do!... *It's grace.*

**“This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.”**

Titus needs to preach this message and the Church needs to hear it over and over - **none of us is saved *by* good works, but we are all saved *to* good works.**

Paul tells Titus to teach these things for they **“are good and profitable to men. But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless.”** Avoid peripheral issues - minutia. Stay focused on grace and godliness.

**“Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.”** If a man is *perpetually* contentious warn that man at first, but if your warning goes unheeded **reject** him, and if need be *eject* him.

It's been said, **“A troublemaker is a person who rocks the boat, then convinces everyone else there's a storm at sea.”** The church of Crete was full of these types.

Over the years, I've realized a mark of spiritual maturity is the ability to identify what's important and what's not - what's worth fighting for and what's not.

I love the ole saying, "A bulldog can whip a skunk, but is it really worth the effort?" There are arguments I can win, but is it really worth the outcome. What good is to win an argument, if in doing so I lose a brother?

This though, is what a difficult person doesn't get. He delights in *pushing buttons, stirring up arguments, and causing dissension*. This person *harms our harmony*.

Paul's remedy for a contentious person in the church is simple and straightforward. Warn the guy twice. **And if he doesn't change his way, send him on his way!**

Paul concludes his letter with some personal notes...

Verse 12, "When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis (a city on the Greek mainland), for I have decided to spend the winter there. Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing."

It's sad how folks like to pick on lawyers. I've heard it said, "It's 99% of the lawyers that give the rest of them a bad name." *Zenas* was a good lawyer and Paul's pal.

"And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful." Here's how to maintain an effective witness for Jesus - **do good works and meet urgent needs.**

"All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen." At times all of us have

to deal with Cretans. Let's remember, difficult people require loving, but strong leadership.

***Here're five take-aways from this morning...***

Difficult people require strong leadership.

The church should function like a family.

Home is where life makes up its mind.

Grace is a turtle on top of a fence post.

Grace has appeared and teaches us how to live.