

CRUCIFIED TO LIVE

“I am crucified . . . nevertheless I live”

by

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CHAPTER TEN

PAUL TUTORS TITUS

“**To Titus my oxen son after the common faith**” (Titus 1:4)

Companionship is clearly cherished by the human heart as one of the richest of life’s endowments. Solitude can be endured when conditions so decree it, but association of the finer sort makes a golden contribution to one’s quest for genuine happiness.

- The miles of a journey are shorter in the company of a friend.
- A task is much the lighter with a partner by one’s side.
- The joys of life are sweeter when shared with another.
- The hours are marked by merry moments in the atmosphere of mutuality.

Nor is this exclusively a terrestrial principle. There are heavenly hosts —companies in the glory, and the Father has the Son at His own right hand.

The Lord sent out the seventy in dual arrangement, while the Holy Spirit suffered Paul to have colleagues in his tireless offensives. In the pioneer push westward with the ever-glorious message, Barnabas faithfully plodded by his side. Silas was his partner on the second journey, while several were in his company on the third. Over marsh and meadow, up the slopes and across the plains, along winding by-paths, in weather fair and foul, this hardy, wholesome gospeller was privileged to enjoy the encouragement of fine, faithful companions. They had knelt in quiet, heavenly communion at many a turn in the road. This was fellowship in the gospel which set the Apostle’s heartstrings vibrating with joyous and unceasing appreciation.

His preaching was with clearer unction and more commanding force when an Epaphras was wrestling at the throne of grace in his behalf. The rigors of a long trek had their compensation in the generous hospitality of Lydia. The bleeding wounds of the lashes and the aching ankles in the tightened stocks were sweetly anaesthetized by the harmony of hymns with Silas lending his voice of praise. The rooting and grounding of novices in the faith was greatly facilitated with people like Aquila and Priscilla assisting. Such associations often gave the dark clouds a silver lining in the Apostle’s varied career, and hours in darkened prisons were brightened as he turned the leaves of memory’s album with sweet reminiscences of faithful fellow-labourers.

Frequent notices inhere in the inspired record of the Apostle concerning a personality greatly esteemed. It was Titus.

It would be difficult to accurately and authentically trace the biography of Titus, but it is clear that Paul introduced him to the Saviour, after which he endeared himself to the Apostle as a dependable and trustworthy servant of Christ. Just where he was born and of what his background consisted does not greatly concern us at this point. His name is Roman and it is an established fact that he was a Gentile believer. A strong affection subsisted between the two and each had firm confidence in the other.

After departing from Galatia and enjoying an extended ministry at Ephesus, the apostle proceeded by way of Troas where he confidently expected to meet Titus who had gone on an errand to Corinth. Disappointment through failure to make the contact evoked the humble confession: **“I had no rest in my spirit because I found not Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia”** (II Corinthians 2:13). There the contact was established, and Paul observed with the greatest of evident relief, **“Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus”** (II Corinthians 7:6).

It was this intimate association and close cooperation which prompted Paul to leave Titus on the island of Crete for a most responsible ministry. In due course, a letter came to Titus from his dearly beloved counsellor, which read in part, **“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee.”**

His was the duty of consolidating the gains which God had so graciously granted their gospel preaching on the island. Loose ends could but mean lost efforts, while care and cultivation would produce growth and its eventual fruitage. Titus was designated as the human instrument in establishing the believers in every city on the Isle. He was not Paul’s special envoy, but rather his chosen substitute.

Paul advised Titus to ordain elders in every town.

The instruction was not to develop or train men for the function of this office. That would have been an impossible task for one man throughout the whole island. Nor was it necessary. The assemblies had qualified individuals. The Holy Spirit sees to it that such is true whenever and wherever New Testament churches gather about and abound in the truths of Scripture. Do you ask “how?” Who knows? Who can tell how one’s daily food builds tissue and bone and hair and fingernails? Just so the Word of Life develops faith, spiritual stamina, prayer ability, wisdom and insight. The Divine Administrator, if unhindered, will furnish an assembly of believers with all that is necessary for their good and for God’s glory.

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28).

It is evident that the Christians on Crete lacked information and instruction with regard to these matters, for Paul was forced to take his leave of them before they received his attention.

It must be remembered that literature did not abound in those days and New Testament Scripture was only then in the process of development. This experience on Crete was an integral part of such revered writings.

It was not uncommon for Paul to meet uninformed but willing folk like the twelve disciples at Ephesus who had never as much as heard about the Holy Ghost. Such must be enlightened; and this is precisely why Titus was left on Crete and why, also, this didactical epistle was addressed to him.

All that lacked Paul's attention was the appointment of such as were spiritually equipped to take the oversight. This was the duty of Titus who was thoroughly advised in the Pauline instructions now in hand concerning the position, prerequisites and procedure of elders or bishops. The position has a solemn connotation—"the steward of God." And the standard was to be, and is yet, high for such a holy calling.

The bishop's character was to be above reproach, even blameless.

- He must be the husband of one wife, respected and obeyed by his children.
- His traits must be free of self-will, quick-temper, inclination toward wine, ready retaliation and greed for gain.
- He must be hospitable, philanthropic, sober-minded, upright, saintly and self-controlled.
- He must hold fast the faithful Word in order to exhort believers and to rebuke opponents by the use of sound doctrine.

We can readily agree that the instructions were most complete.

Paul urged Titus to restrain Judaisers.

While Paul had taken his departure from Crete earlier than he desired, he nevertheless had remained there sufficiently long to witness the activities of the opposing forces. He called this matter to the attention of Titus, admitting his knowledge of the presence of many disorderly persons given to idle and misleading talk, who, for the most part, were of the Jewish party. The righting field marshal of the early church waxed most austere in this regard and delivered an unequivocal ultimatum—"You must stop the mouths of such men."

The seriousness of the situation was alarming in the extreme because they were upsetting whole families with false teachings for the sake of making money. They must desist, and Titus was charged with the responsibility of eliminating the subversive forces. With properly appointed elders firmly grounded in sound doctrine, it was not such a mammoth undertaking.

Faithful preaching can sound the death knell to false enunciations within any group; and, outside the assemblies, their falsities would have fallen with all the abject lifelessness which characterized them.

Paul had an exceptional capacity to love the followers of Christ, but the premeditated, demoniacal interference of willful subverters engendered within him the strongest detestation. "Cretans are always liars, noxious [evil] beasts, slow bellies [idle gluttons]" he contended (Titus 1:12).

The language was trenchant but truthful. Fables were foreign to the faith of God's people; and, to make matters all the worse, those who were propagating these extraneous and diversive tales were disobedient men of defiled mind and conscience.

Titus was urged to rebuke them sharply.

Paul instructed Titus to stress decorous living for Christians.

Titus may not have been adept in the psychological approaches to human behaviorism. But, then, that was not a too serious deficiency. On this subject, as on all others, Paul was most explicit.

The elders, by virtue of their high principles and rigid conformity to the noble standards of divine prescription, could add much to the general Christian atmosphere of the assembly; but it was most essential for all the members to contribute, through proper conduct, to the general appeal of the testimony of the local church and to the strength of its God-given ministry.

Maturity should set an example; for, if experience of age makes any contribution to one's life, it should deepen the devotion, enrich the testimony and make firm the faith.

“speak thou the things which become sound doctrine,” Paul counseled, **“That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded”** (Titus 2:2-6).

These rules, if applied, could not but make for an enviable witness in the higher realm of godly comportment. How lofty were Paul's ideals—how far-reaching his outlook and how strong his desire for healthy Christian growth in holy edification!

Paul counseled Titus to exercise care in his own personal conduct.

A bishop in a certain denomination was once reputedly rebuked for behavior ill-becoming to his office, whereupon he justifyingly explained, “I did that as a man and not as a bishop.” Quickly there came this stinging retort: “If the devil gets the man, he will have the bishop also.”

Titus must not become lax, and, while urging others to run well the race, be disapproved himself.

“In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works,” Paul pleaded, **“In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you”**

This was by no means distrust. It was fatherly advice of the tenderest sort. It was the instruction of able and mature judgment. He knew that pride takes root in a most unsuspecting manner and grows with alarming rapidity to choke humility, to charm the flesh, to change the aim and to choose the subordinate.

Privilege and popularity have played havoc with Christian testimony through the ages and countless numbers have so lessened their devotion that God has, in such cases, been treated as little more than a convenience.

Titus must not be taken for granted. It was not likely he would fail in this respect, but the possibility is always a strong monster ready to capitalize on any relaxation of careful attention to the exemplary forms of Christlike decorum.

This timely advice, freighted with unaffected love, was received with sweet appreciation.

Paul besought Titus to impress honour upon slaves.

There is a hint in Paul's epistle to Titus about the cosmopolitan character of the average Christian assembly. There were aged and youthful, servants and slaves, civic authorities and civilians. Perhaps the servants were in the majority, for **"the common folk heard Him gladly."**

It was not more important for slaves to be instructed in the acceptable standards of Christian conduct, but theirs was a position highly provocative of discontent and ill temper. Their hours of labour were long and their tasks most exacting. Turning his attention to this particular class of individuals, the Apostle gave considerable emphasis as he charged Titus to **"exhort servants [slaves] to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things"**

The words which Paul used in this command should elicit special notice. The word **"purloining"** or *"pilfering"*, means *to render ineffective or inoperative*. This shows the tremendous importance of proper behavior. An ill-considered word, an improper gesture, an unbecoming act could easily nullify the prestige of a life ministry. This is the destructiveness of satanic subtlety.

The word employed by the apostle for doing credit to or adorning the doctrine (*k o s m e o*) has a basic thought of *polishing or making bright*. Nothing can so make the life of Christ reflective in a believer as exemplary behavior. What one is speaks more loudly and with more convincing force than what one does or says.

The grace of God trains us to renounce ungodliness and to live temperate, upright and pious lives in this now-age. This gives to us the triangular concern in conduct; i.e. as to self, self-control; as to others, justness; as unto God, godliness. These practical precepts properly applied in their combined emphasis will produce manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit:

- Love, joy and peace toward God;
- Longsuffering, gentleness and goodness to others;
- Faith, meekness and temperance in regard to oneself.

Paul insisted that Titus curb social and political turbulence.

Paul was an ardent advocate of the obedience of believers to the powers that be.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers," he urged, **"for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God"** (Romans 13:1).

There evidently was an early tendency, traces of which obtain today, for Christians to feel that being yoked to Christ presaged an utter disregard for civil regulations.

Nothing could have more decisively defeated their purpose on Crete than the growth of such an ill-founded attitude.

The portents of such dangers must be dealt with vigorously and public declaration of the biblical position was necessary in order to reach the attention of all. **“Remind your hearers that they must submit to the rulers who are in authority,”** Paul wrote, and **“to be ready to every good work [obey their laws].”**

Realizing that he himself was once without the proper appreciation of godliness, he added, **“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.”**

Then, the transforming and enlightening love of God entered, making Christians to be more responsible in their attitudes and actions. This was, statedly, the **“washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.”** Such a work of grace should have a high practical value in producing law-abiding citizens and more gracious associates in life’s various contacts.

Paul implored Titus to check theological speculations.

The archenemy of things high and holy is constantly attempting to vitiate matters vital to our calling. If by some artful artifice or subterfuge he can, for a moment, inveigle the Christian warrior to lower his guard, he is ready to register a strong, stunning blow.

Paul might have engaged the theological disputers in their incriminating retorts about the genealogy of our Lord, and he might have been open for debate regarding questions pertaining to the Law. With Titus, it was quite another matter, fraught with danger. He was less experienced and not too well informed. Besides, his appointment was to otherwise engage his attention. He was to supply the things that were wanting in church organization which would pave the way for an all-around strengthening of the believers to face any eventuality—to give them assurance in spiritual verities regardless of any insurgent enemy attempt.

Therefore, the Apostle felt it a part of wisdom to advise Titus to **“avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.”** Such involvements are just as vain today. There is no spiritual nutriment in religious argument. It is far better to counsel the willing and confirm the saints.

Paul demanded that Titus discipline the heretical.

The more the Spirit stresses unity the fiercer Satan presses for disunity. Not all dissenters from the Truth dissociate from the assembly. It is to the enemy’s advantage to have saboteurs on the inside, striking at every opportunity to disturb the peace of the body. Let it forever be observed that **“God is the author of peace and not of confusion;”** and when disturbances develop, there is need for prayer, and possibly some invocation of stringent measures to free the local Church of the foreign element which foments strife. On this score, the beloved Apostle was firm in his conclusions. **“A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself”** (Titus 3:10, 11). This was fair enough. Two warnings were to be given before more forceful means were applied, and this in the spirit of meekness as Paul wrote in Galatians 6:1.

Paul requested Titus to spend the winter with him.

Titus was to exercise the utmost diligence in fulfilling the instructions of the epistle for it was a matter of grave consequence that newborn babes in Christ on that island should have ample encouragement to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The work must engage his most prayerful interest and attention. He was dealing with God's elect and haphazardness would be utterly unpardonable. However, Paul had a surprise for Titus. The letter carried an invitation from the veteran warrior of the faith to spend the winter with him at Nicopolis, and either Artemas or Tychicus would be sent in due time to relieve him of his duties at Crete.

It is not difficult to imagine with what keen delight the eyes of Titus looked upon these closing lines of a most weighty epistle. It was equally a strong incentive for him to **“put his house in order”** – to have his work well accomplished according to the will of God and the wish of Paul. The visit could not promise the ultimate of joy and blessing in Christian fellowship for either one if the report of Christian progress on the island of Crete were unfavorable.

This was a most delightful prospect for both. Indeed, it is difficult to determine which had the stronger expectation.

Paul carried an insatiable longing to hear about the blessing of God among the believers at Crete. His heart and soul were literally bound up in the welfare of his converts. He was crushed with disappointment because of the poor showing the Galatians made. Crete would surely give him cause for rejoicing. Titus would submit a graphic account of their progress.

And for Titus—well, it would be the richest joy of his life to live with the greatest personality the church ever produced. They both would revel in the company of each other. Fellowship is pleasurable communion between two or more individuals who stand on common ground, think similar thoughts and are interested in like matters of importance.

Since these prerequisites were unquestionably met, the city of Nicopolis had two most joyful visitors during the winter of 66 A.D., the last earthly coldness the beloved apostle experienced, for that year he gave his life gladly for the cause of Christ; and Titus carried sweet memories of that visit the rest of his days.

~ end of chapter 10 ~

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