

Launching Question

We cringe when we hear news of a Christian in public life whose lifestyle is exposed as hypocritical: why is this so bad? *give time for several reasons*

Introduction

Summarise *Titus* so far: what has Titus been left in Crete to do? why?

READ the passage

What else has Titus been left in Crete to do? why?

Divide the passage into sections (ie spot which groups are being addressed)

The grace of God

Looking only at verses 11-14, does Paul mean by 'the grace of God'?

What things does Paul say that this gospel does?

saves what do these verses say we're rescued from?
 how are we rescued, according to these verses? (no jargon!)
 what was the underlying purpose for the rescue?
 what 'appearing' is Paul talking about? (two answers)
 what is it like being a Christian between now and Jesus' return?

trains what does the grace of God teach us to do? expand on each of these
how do you think this teaching/training of us might actually happen?

Stand back from these verses, and try to put 11-14 into your own words.

Why are these verses here? what does the 'For ...' (11) mean?

Teach what is in accord with sound doctrine

Take a large piece of paper and write the name of each group addressed.

What is Titus to teach each group?

write it up on your paper and discuss points to note on way through for each group, what are our contemporary aspirations? Compare.

Are these kinds of things appealing to the world? when are they/aren't they?

Are there common themes/words/phrases? what does godliness look like?

How is Titus to teach?

'Encourage and rebuke' (15) are the same words as in 1:9. Why?

The main issue here is not so much understanding as obedience!

So be practical: how might these values we've read affect your godliness -
 ... at work ... in your family ... at church?

Summary

Why is it so bad if our Christian lives don't match up to what we say?

How can we 'encourage and rebuke' one another to live a godly life?

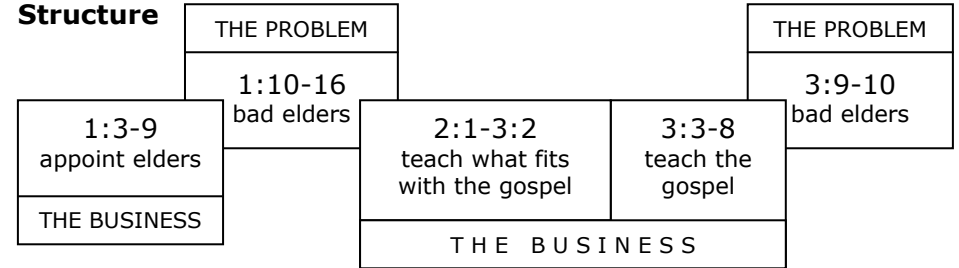
And in doing so, how do we avoid opposite dangers of 'legalism' / 'licence'?

In quiet, each person note down two areas in which you've been challenged.

Background

Titus and *1 and 2 Timothy* are written by Paul to his young protégés who had been sent as trouble-shooters to local churches (Titus to Crete, Timothy to Ephesus). Titus is to *straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders* (1:3). He is told to teach *the truth that leads to godliness* (1:2),

Structure



Theme Sentence for 2:1-3:2

Titus is to teach 'the truth that leads to godliness' to all groups in the church.

Structure of 2:1-3:2

- 1-10 Teach the truth that leads to godliness ...
- to older men (2)
 - to older women (3) who will teach ...
 - to younger women (4-5)
 - to younger men (6)
 - to slaves (9-10)
 - to everyone (3:1-2)
- (and in your teaching set an example, doing it as an elder should)
- 11-14 ... because that gospel both saves and teaches us

Ideas for Application from 2:1-3:2

- It's easy for our Christianity to fall into the opposite dangers of legalism (ie you must do a, b or c to be a proper Christian) or of licence (ie how we behave, we know we'll be forgiven). But fear of these dangers shouldn't prevent us teaching godly behaviour.
- Our motives are often hard to untangle; but encouraging one another to live a godly life because of the gospel should be our aim.
- These verses are not so much hard to understand as to obey.

- 1 Titus' second job in Crete, as he 'straightens out what was left unfinished' (1:5), is to 'teach what is in accord with sound doctrine'. This phrase hints back at the key idea of Titus: that **knowledge of the truth leads to godliness** (1:1). Paul works through the key social relationships within the church and describes the appropriate Christian behaviour for each group: this godliness is 'what is in accord with sound doctrine'. 2:11-14 will explain how these two things are connected.

One recurring theme is how Christians are perceived outside the church. If our behaviour doesn't match the gospel we claim has the power of 'renewal' (3:5 cf 2:11-14), then people will 'malign (not just us, but also) the word of God' (5). On the other hand, if outsiders have 'nothing bad to say about us' (8), then 'the teaching about God our Saviour' will be 'attractive' (10) to them.

But whilst this behaviour is appealing, it will also conflict with the reputation of Cretans more generally (1:12) and with the materialistic, selfish 'good life' of our generation, constantly pursuing a higher or better standard of living. Compare contemporary aspirations with what Paul teaches is in accord with sound doctrine for each group:

- 2 **Older men** is more-or-less the same word as 'elders' in 1:3f. So this matches what we saw there, that there's no great distinction in the godliness we should look for in church leaders, and what we'd expect in any mature Christian; what distinguishes 'elders' is in 1:9. It is also an assumption throughout this letter that the church is a household, so we should look to the normal leaders of households to be church leaders.
- 3 **Older women** are also to be teachers, in particular of the next group, the younger women. ('What is good' is used elsewhere in Titus as a shorthand for 'a godly life' cf 3:8, 14.)
- 4-5 **Younger women** are the one group that Paul doesn't tell Titus to teach directly: this time, the job is given to the older women. This may be a wisdom issue (ie keep the young pastor away from the temptation of attractive younger women!), or a local issue (cf 1 Tim 5:11-14; 2 Tim 3:6f where church problems have specifically emerged amongst younger women), or an appropriateness issue (ie that male leadership in the church is exercised over younger women only via older women).
- 6 **Younger men** have just the one instruction: 'self-control' is a recurring theme (2, 5, 6, 12 cf 1:8) probably meaning something like 'wise-headed'.
- 9-10 These **slaves** are surely set to be model employees!
- 3:1 **The people** (= all of the above groups?) are now told how to relate more generally to the world around, beginning with those who govern.

- 7-8 Titus is also told how he should teach. He is to behave with the same godliness he's encouraging in others, and thereby provide a 'model'. If he doesn't, it reflects on more than just him (cf 'us' 8).

- 15 Perhaps even more significantly, here the two words 'encourage and rebuke' are exactly the same words as 1:9. So this chapter models what all 'elders' should teach as they exercise their ministry.

- 11-14 provides the theological basis for the instruction sections (cf the 'For ...' at start of 11), and is the letter's key passage on why knowledge of the truth leads to godliness. The answer is that the gospel (which Paul can attractively summarise as 'the grace of God' 11) does two things: it not only 'brings salvation', it also 'teaches'. We tend to talk far more about the first of these than about the second.

Paul is saying more than just 'being a Christian must affect the way we live'. These Christians needed radical change from the infamous Cretan national character (cf 1:12; 3:3) in which they'd been raised, and Paul claims that power for that change is in the gospel.

the gospel saves us

Paul is clear that God's salvation is for all kinds of people (including all the different groupings he's been addressing) from 'wickedness' and to 'purify a people'. We live between the double 'appearings' of Jesus, when Jesus gave himself as Redeemer, and when he'll return as Saviour: looking back to the cross and forward to the second coming are the crucial marker posts for my Christian life.

So here is the motive behind being 'eager to do what is good'. We are now Jesus' own people, belonging to him, and waiting for him.

the gospel teaches / trains us

When the gospel saves us, we don't then just carry on with life as before. In fact, that same gospel trains us both to say 'no' to the things that mark this present age, and to say 'yes' to the way that we were always meant to live, the way of life that puts us both in control of ourselves, and in right relation to others and to God.

This teaching is not so much the picture of a schoolmaster standing at the front of a classroom, but more like what Paul says (eg) in Romans 8:5-17 about every Christian being 'led by the Spirit' into battle with the sinful nature. (Exactly how the gospel produces this godliness must wait until we get to the word 'regeneration'/'rebirth' in 3:5.) Of course, this explains why false gospels (eg 1:10-16) are ultimately recognizable – they don't 'teach' like this, so can't yield godliness.

It's worth being clear then that the little phrase we sometimes use 'salvation by good works' is nothing of the kind: it's talking about asking God to accept us on the basis of unacceptable, sinful works!