



AN APOSTOLIC LETTER TO

TITUS

Paul's "True Son in the Faith"

WITH CLASS QUESTIONS FOR EACH LESSON

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INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTER TO TITUS

PAUL AND TITUS:

One of the still unrevealed “mysteries” of the New Testament is the question of why Luke made no mention at all of Titus in Acts as he recorded the words and activities of the apostle Paul. That Titus was a rather prominent participant in the unfolding history of the early churches and a close companion of the apostle to the Gentiles is evident from references to him in several of the epistles. In Second Corinthians, for example, Paul was disturbed when he didn’t find Titus at Troas (2Cor. 2:12,13); he was later comforted when Titus came to Macedonia (7:5,6). Titus was used by Paul as both messenger and agent to Corinth in promoting a contribution for poor saints (7:13,14; 8:6,16,23), and he commended Titus’ behavior while there (12:18). In Galatians, Paul states that he had taken Titus to Jerusalem for the conference about keeping the Law and had resisted the efforts of the Judaizers to have him circumcised (Gal. 2:1,3). Finally, it is clear that Titus had been with Paul in his second Roman imprisonment but had already departed into Dalmatia by the time Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy (2Tim. 4:10).

Paul’s affection for Titus and his confidence in him to discharge his duties to the Lord are obvious as we read his remarks in this letter and in other references. He called Titus his “true son in our common faith” (Titus 1:4); he confirmed him as his “brother” (2Cor. 2:13); he commended him as his “partner and fellow worker” (2Cor. 8:23); and he assured the Corinthians that he and Titus had the “same spirit” and walked in the “same steps” (2Cor. 12:18).

THE TASK:

In the same way that Paul had left Timothy at Ephesus to assure that some persons there should “teach no other doctrine” (1Tim. 1:3), he had left Titus on the island of Crete to “set in order the things that are lacking and to appoint elders in every city” (Tit. 1:5). In both instances there was unfinished business that Paul chose to leave to a trusted ally to complete. We may only wonder about the reason(s) behind these decisions, but the eminent Pauline scholars Coneybeare and Howson offer these interesting views:

Nevertheless, it is evident from the Epistles to Timotheus and Titus, written about this time, that he was prevented by other duties from staying in this oriental region so long as his presence was required. He left his disciples to that which, had circumstances permitted, he would have done himself. He was plainly hurried from one point to another. Perhaps also he had lost some of his former energy. This might well be the case, if we consider all he had endured during thirty years of labour. The physical hardships which he had undergone were of themselves sufficient to wear out the most robust constitution; and we know that his health was already broken many years before. But in addition to these bodily trials, the moral conflicts which he continually encountered could not fail to tire down the elasticity of his spirit. The hatred manifested by so large

and powerful a section even of the Christian Church; the destruction of so many early friendships; the desertion of followers; the crowd of anxieties which pressed upon him daily, and the 'care of all the Churches'; must needs have preyed upon the mental energy of any man, but especially of one whose temperament was so ardent and impetuous. When approaching the age of seventy, he might be worn out both in body and mind. And this will account for the comparative want of vigour and energy which has been attributed to the Pastoral Epistles, if there be any such deficiency; and may perhaps also be in part the cause of his opposing these errors by deputy, which we might rather have expected him to uproot by his own personal exertions.

The letter addresses several important duties that need Titus' attention at once. In addition to the need for appointing elders in the churches, the mouths of false teachers must be "stopped"; various groups of church members were in need of instruction and guidance into proper behavior toward one another; and conviction was needed in the hearts of the disciples that "good works" were far more important to Jesus than "disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law."

THE HISTORY:

We learn of Titus' work in the Lord through Paul's epistles rather than in Luke's account in Acts. We can summarize these activities from the available references.

- (1) It appears that Titus had been converted and baptized by Paul himself. Paul calls him a "true son in the faith" (Titus 1:4). We are not informed about the details of the young man's conversion.
- (2) It may be inferred that Titus was an idolatrous Gentile prior to his conversion. He is called a "Greek" when Paul took him and Barnabas to the conference at Jerusalem to discuss the question of circumcision (Gal. 2:1,3). Titus was uncircumcised and, unlike Timothy (Acts 16:1), had no reason or expectation to be circumcised. Paul refused the demands made that he undergo this Jewish ritual.
- (3) Titus probably accompanied Paul back to Antioch following the conference and likely became his associate from that time forward. We know he was with Paul on his first visit to Corinth and offered valuable service in gospel work (2Cor. 8:23).
- (4) Paul employed Titus to carry the first letter to Corinth from Ephesus, from where he wrote. His purpose was twofold: to deliver instructions for the remediation of numerous problems in the Corinthian church and to encourage the disciples there to increase their participation in collections to be taken later to distressed Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.
- (5) Titus was also the messenger who took Paul's second letter to Corinth from Macedonia (2Cor. 8:23;12:18), from where that letter was written (2Cor. 1:16,17).
- (6) It is often conjectured that Titus accompanied Paul to Jerusalem as one of the brethren who took the Gentiles' offering to their Jewish brethren. He may also have gone with the imprisoned apostle from Jerusalem to Rome and may have been with him for a time during his first captivity. These activities, however, cannot be

documented, although they seem to be perfectly reasonable assumptions in the light of information we have.

- (7) We find no specific reference to Titus from the year 58 A.D. when he delivered the second Corinthian letter, until 62 A.D. when he was left by Paul at Crete to accomplish important tasks among the churches. It is supposed, with good reason, that this occurred following Paul's release from his first imprisonment and prior to his subsequent jailing for alleged crimes against the empire.
- (8) It may be safely concluded that Titus complied with Paul's request to join him as soon as possible at Nicopolis, where the apostle proposed to winter (Titus 3:12). Tradition says that when Titus reported the problems existing among the saints on the island of Crete, Paul determined to return with him there to attend personally to their resolution.
- (9) Other traditions suggest that while at Crete for this second visit, Paul learned of the harsh treatment being given to Christians in Rome by Nero's government. He thought he might be able to encourage and strengthen the disciples in their hardships and decided to return with Titus to Rome, where he was imprisoned again. Titus was at Rome with Paul until he was dispatched on some mission to Dalmatia (2Tim. 4:9).
- (10) Some ancient writers declare that Titus eventually returned to Crete, where he died at the age of ninety-four. Some assign him to various offices in the church at Crete, but there is no evidence of any truth in these reports.

THE PLACES:

The place *to which* this epistle was sent was Crete, which is one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea. It extends about 160 miles in length, 35 miles in width. It was reported in earlier times to have been the location of one hundred cities [villages]. Numerous fanciful pagan legends distinguished Crete from other ancient locations, the most notable of which was that it was the site of the tomb of Jupiter, the Roman deity. Some early writers claim that it was first populated by people from Palestine who are called Cherethites in the Old Testament (e.g., 2Sam. 8:18). These settlers were noted for their skills in archery, navigation, and the less admirable practices of gluttony, drunkenness, lust, lying, and covetousness. Epimenides, himself a Cretan poet, was quoted by Paul as charging that his countrymen were "always" notorious liars, gluttons, and idlers (Titus 1:12). The apostle, moreover, labeled the charge as "true."

The place *from which* Paul wrote the letter is uncertain. Leading scholars have identified different places as the apostle's location when he sent his directions to Titus. For example, Albert Barnes is certain that it was Nicopolis, where Paul planned to winter and to which he summoned Titus from Crete (Titus 3:12). Barnes further identifies the letter's destination from other cities of the same name as Nicopolis in Epirus, a city in Greece. On

the other hand, James Macknight asserts that Paul's statement about wintering "*there*" at Nicopolis eliminates that place as the one from where this book originated. He concludes that Colossae is a better choice. Other scholars assign the site of authorship to Corinth.

THE TIME:

Regardless of the divergent opinions about the *place* of origin for the letter, the scholarship is generally agreed that it was written by Paul during the *time* between his first and second Roman imprisonments. It is significant that Luke makes no mention of any visit to Crete by Paul prior to his first captivity, noting only that his ship "passed" Crete with difficulty on its voyage to Rome (Acts 27:7,8). Time then would not have allowed any teaching there or any occasion to "leave" Titus in Crete to appoint elders in every city (Tit. 1:5). It seems clear that there was a period of time *following* his imprisonment when he had worked among the churches there in the company of Titus and had learned about the problems and conditions that demanded the attention of someone who could correct them. Such circumstances would set the date of writing between 63 A.D. and 67 A.D., but setting a more precise time seems very difficult and altogether unnecessary.

THE AFFINITY:

It is interesting that the books of Titus and First Timothy show numerous and striking similarities. Paley, in his *Horae Paulinae*, says:

Both letters were addressed to persons left by the writer to preside in their respective churches during his absence. Both letters are principally occupied with describing the qualifications to be sought for those whom they should appoint to offices in the church; and the ingredients of this description are, in both letters, nearly the same. Timothy and Titus, likewise, are cautioned against the same prevailing corruptions, and, in particular, against the same misdirection of their cares and studies.

Adam Clarke notes several references in the two books that are remarkably alike.

1. "To Timothy, my true son in the faith..." (1:2);
"To Titus, my true son in our common faith..." (1:4).
2. "...nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies..." (1Tim. 1:4);
"...not giving heed to Jewish fables..." (Tit. 1:14); "...avoid foolish ...genealogies" (3:9).
3. "...be an example to the believers..." (1Tim. 4:12);
"...be a pattern of good works..." (Tit. 2:7);
4. "Let no one despise your youth..." (1Tim. 4:12);
"Let no one despise you..." (Tit. 2:15);
5. "...remain in Ephesus that you may..." (1Tim.1:3);
"...I left you in Crete that you should..." (Tit. 1:5).

Clarke also notes that several expressions appear only in the letters to Timothy and Titus.

1. "This is a faithful saying..." occurs only in First Timothy (3), Second Timothy (1),

and Titus (1).

2. "Sound," as it is applied to words or doctrine, is found in First Timothy (2), Second Timothy (2), and in Titus (3). Also, "sound in [the] faith" is found twice in Titus. Such expressions are not used elsewhere than in these letters.
3. "God our Savior" is repeated three times in First Timothy and three times in Titus. It is otherwise found only one other time, in Jude, verse 25.

"The most natural accounts which can be given of these resemblances, is to suppose that the two epistles were written nearly at the same time, and whilst the same ideas and phrases dwelt in the writer's mind" (Clarke).

A "PASTORAL" EPISTLE:

Among Biblical scholars, First Timothy, Second Timothy, and Titus are commonly referred to as Paul's "Pastoral Epistles." This designation arises out of the assumption that Timothy and Titus were appointed by Paul to serve in his absence as "pastors" over the churches of Christ in Ephesus and Crete. Of course, such an assumption runs counter to Paul's own teaching about pastors in these letters. Timothy was commissioned to regulate the service, qualifications, and appointment of present and additional pastors [shepherds; elders] in Ephesus, and Titus was charged to "appoint elders" in every church on the island of Crete. Neither was a "pastor" who served in the office described in these epistles, nor can we suppose that either one met certain of the qualifications specified for these pastors of churches.

THE OUTLINE:

"SETTING THINGS IN ORDER"

- I. The authority of Paul's commission. 1:1-3
- II. The charge to Titus. 1:4-16
 - A. As a "true son in the faith." 1:4
 - B. Appoint elders in every city. 1:5-9
 - C. Stop the mouths of false teachers. 1:10-16
- III. Speaking sound doctrine. 2:1-15
 - A. About the conduct of church members. 2:1-10
 1. Older men. 2:2
 2. Older women. 2:3
 3. Younger women. 2:4,5
 4. Young men. 2:6-8
 5. Servants. 2:9,10

- B. About the demands of God's grace. 2:11-14**
 - 1. Righteous living. 2:12**
 - 2. Steadfastness. 2:13,14**
- C. Speaking with authority. 2:15**

- IV. Encouraging good works. 3:1-11**
 - A. By all Christians. 3:1-8**
 - 1. As our indebtedness. 3:3-6**
 - 2. As the cost of our blessing. 3:7**
 - 3. As our duty. 3:8**
 - B. By Titus. 3:9-11**

- V. Closing instructions. 3:12-15**

[All scripture quotations and references in this study, including class questions, are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.]

Chapter One

Verses 1-3-- THE AUTHORITY OF PAUL'S COMMISSION

1. Paul identifies himself as a “servant of God.” He also claims the same title of “servant” in addressing the Romans (Rom. 1:1) and the Philippians (Phil. 1:1). *Doulos* [servant] is “the most abject, servile term in use among the Greeks for a slave” (Wuest). It conveyed several ideas about Paul’s servitude to Jesus.
 - a. It refers to one *born into* slavery. Paul had become the Lord’s *doulos* when he was born of water and the Spirit into the kingdom of Christ (John 3:1-5).
 - b. *Doulos* refers to someone whose will is completely subjugated to the will of another. The Christian slave is obligated to his Master “that he should no longer live...in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God” (1Pet. 4:2).
 - c. One who served as the *doulos* of another was bound to him so tightly that his bond could be severed only by death. Death to sin breaks the bond which joins each sinner to Satan (Rom. 6:6,7), whereupon he exchanges his service to the devil for a far better service to God (Rom. 6:17,18).
 - d. A *doulos* served the best interests of his master without regard to his own desires. Paul time and again had clearly demonstrated his willingness to make whatever sacrifices of comfort and safety were necessary to the spreading of the gospel. [See his list of afflictions he had suffered to further the truth, 2Cor. 11:23-33.]
2. “Apostle” is the term Paul most often employs in his salutations. It was important that the recipients of his letters be reminded of his special authorization from Jesus Christ to speak the mind of God to man (1Cor. 2:6-13). His apostolic commission had sent him to the Gentiles, among whom Titus also now was teaching. Paul would:
 - a. Open their eyes;
 - b. Turn them from darkness to light;
 - c. Turn them from the power of Satan to God;
 - d. Enable them to receive forgiveness of sins;
 - e. Give them an inheritance among those sanctified by faith in Jesus (Acts 26:18).
3. Paul’s apostleship was “according to” the faith of God’s elect and their acknowledgment of the truth. His authority, of course, was not *limited by* others’ faith, but it rather *corresponded to* every disciple’s need to develop and maintain a saving faith. Whatever heaven required for faithful service, he was equipped to provide through the exercise of his apostolic powers (Rom. 1:16,17).
4. Acceptance of his apostolic message would lead men to godliness and eternal life.
5. The gospel of Christ was the fulfillment of God’s promise to save mankind. That promise was made long before its benefits became available to the world. “Before time

began” is also translated “before the world began” [KJV]; “before times eternal” [ASV]; “ages ago” [RSV]; “before the ages began” [Conf.]. Some commentators place this promise before “the beginning” of time in Genesis 1:1; others at some later time. James Macknight contends that the literal translation is “before the secular times,” which refers to the reckoning of time by the Jewish jubilees and by the Gentile generations of men. He cites the “ages” and “generations” of Col. 1:26 as a similar expression. The “promise” he adds, was the one made to Adam and Eve in Eden that the Christ would bruise the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15).

6. Although the promise was made earlier, it was only in “due time” [the time best suited to success] that God manifested the details of its implementation through the preaching of the gospel by Paul and other inspired messengers to whom it was committed.
7. Paul had been obedient to a “heavenly vision” in which he had been charged to take the gospel to “Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15; 26:19).

Verse 4--- THE CHARGE TO TITUS, A “SON IN THE FAITH”

1. It is commonly supposed that Paul had converted both Titus and Timothy, which accounted for their descriptions as “my true son in our common faith” and “my true son in the faith.”
2. “Grace and peace” was Paul’s uniform greeting in every letter except those to Timothy and Titus. In those two, he adds “mercy” to his salutation.
3. The immediate reason for Paul’s leaving Crete is undisclosed, but his reason for leaving Titus behind is certain. Two very important undertakings that Paul had discussed with Titus and which the younger preacher had been commanded to accomplish as soon as possible had not yet been completed:
 - a. Setting in order whatever things were “lacking” in the churches of Crete;
 - b. Appointing elders over local churches in every city where such churches had been established.
4. These two tasks were closely related. Paul’s travels with Titus among the churches had revealed a number of deficiencies needing attention:
 - a. The disciples were being harassed by idle talkers and deceivers;
 - b. Church members needed to show better behavior toward other Christians;
 - c. Every saint should learn to be peaceable, gentle, and humble toward all men and should avoid all unprofitable and useless distractions from his/her mission;
 - d. Maintaining good works must be a high priority for all the saved.

Verses 5-9-- THE CHARGE TO TITUS-- APPOINT ELDERS

1. Needed corrections within local churches would be much more likely to occur if elders were appointed and made responsible for their accomplishment. As “overseers” (1Pet. 5:2) and “shepherds” [pastors--Eph. 4:11], their attention would be devoted to guiding errant disciples into the ways prescribed by Paul and Titus in their gospel teaching.

2. The greatest success in reforming deviant behavior would take place only if the best men available were installed in positions of authority in the churches. Prerequisites for their appointment were specific and demanding. Each elder must be:
- a. **Blameless.** *Anegkletos* is “not to call to account, not to bring a charge against.” This requirement does not demand perfection, but it does call for a strong display of the highest qualities to be found in the best of men. This blamelessness appears to be applied to a man’s general character and possibly is intended to govern the evaluation of all his other qualities. Paul’s list later orders that an elder must be “blameless, as a steward of God” (verse seven), a more specific qualification;
 - b. **The husband of one wife.** There are various interpretations given to this stipulation:
 - (1) The elder must be a married man and must not be a polygamist;
 - (2) The elder may be unmarried, but, if married, must have only one wife;
 - (3) The elder must have only one wife at a time; he may remarry if his wife dies;
 - (4) The elder may have only one wife at *any* time; he may *not* remarry.
 Kenneth Wuest comments that “the literal translation is, ‘a man of one woman’... since character is emphasized by the Greek construction, the bishop should be a man who loves only one woman as his wife. It should be his nature to isolate and centralize his love”;
 - c. **The father of faithful children.** “Children that believe” [ASV] are Christians (Acts 2:44; 5:14, etc.). Children of deacons, who often are younger men than elders, are to be under the “rule” of their fathers (1Tim. 3:12), but children of elders must also be under the rule of Christ (Col. 3:15). This is further indicated by the restriction of freedom from any guilt of “dissipation” [*asotia*-- “riot” in the ASV-- “prodigality, wastefulness, profligacy”] or “insubordination” [*anupotaktos*-- “unruly” in the ASV, “not subject to rule”]. The former term is the same one applied to the lifestyle of the “prodigal” son (Luke 15:13), and the latter term would include disobedience both to God and parents;
 - d. **Blameless, as a steward of God.** “Steward” is *oikonomos*-- “the manager of a household or estate.” An elders’s overriding blamelessness must be especially evident in his responsible behavior as an overseer and shepherd of the Lord’s people. His allocation of time and energy to his pastoral duties must be significant. Personal sacrifices must be frequent and willingly made (1Pet. 5:2,3);
 - e. **Not self-willed** [*authade*-- “to enjoy one’s self, take one’s pleasure; hence, self-pleasing, arrogant”]. It is as an *example* rather than as a *lord* that an elder best serves himself and his congregation (1Pet. 5:2,3). Input from others is a valued component of many decisions that must be made by the elders of a local church;
 - f. **Not quick-tempered.** Paul required of *all* disciples that “a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition” (1Tim. 2:24,25). A quick temper is the surest route to failure in teaching others and to leading them out of wayward conduct into behavior ap-

propriate to the Christian life;

- g. **Not given to wine** [ASV-- “no brawler”]. “Given to wine” is *me paroinon* and means, “one who sits long at his wine.” Vincent’s rendition is “quarrelsome over wine,” and Wuest says:

Paul’s meaning is that the bishop, in partaking of wine, which in the first century was a common beverage not having the associations with which it is identified today, must not drink it so freely that he becomes intoxicated and hence quarrelsome. While this injunction does not teach total abstinence in the case of intoxicating liquors, but rather temperance, yet the present day Christian should use an injunction as 1Corinthians 10:31 as a guide in the case of present day indulgence in intoxicating liquors.

An elder assumes the same risks as anyone else should he participate at all in drinking wine, beer, or hard liquors. He risks his reputation as an example to others, particularly the young, if his drinking becomes known to others; he risks his health and his future usefulness in the kingdom of God if his private drinking in moderation leads him into the addiction and disgrace that so often result in spite of best intentions to the contrary. “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall,” is unquestionably good advice (1Cor. 10:12);

- h. **Not violent.** This general restriction on an elder’s conduct toward other people complements the “gentle” nature that should characterize any man who loves his fellows enough to willingly sacrifice himself in their behalf as he leads them by his example. This same idea is conveyed in the ASV, “no striker”;
- i. **Not greedy for money.** Those who desire to be rich in this world’s goods will be often tempted and will submit themselves to a lust that will likely cause them to “stray from the faith” and to “pierce themselves with many sorrows” (1Tim. 6:9,10). No man who places a premium on wealth can successfully lead his flock into godly conduct;
- j. **Hospitable.** *Philoxenos* means, “love of strangers.” The ASV adds, “given to” hospitality, which indicates a strong commitment to the “love of strangers.” The idea seems to be that elders must expand their openness and support to more than an inner circle of friends. The same concern for the welfare of others in distress or loneliness that was exhibited by many Old Testament characters [e.g., Gen. 19:1-3; Judges 19:16-21] also should be displayed by men who serve as “father figures” who provide for and protect the well-being of both strangers and familiar friends;
- k. **A lover of what is good.** The KJV says, “a lover of good *men*,” the ASV, “a lover of *good*,” and the RSV, “a lover of *goodness*.” The emphasis in all three variations is on the interest an elder shows toward people and things that are compatible with the godliness encouraged by gospel truth (verse one). His companions will be other men who share with him a deep appreciation for righteous conduct, and his principal activities will be those things that contribute to a deeper spirituality in himself and others;
- l. **Sober-minded.** He is not a humorless man, but an elder is by nature serious about

the “big” issues of life and about his responsibilities toward his own salvation and about the salvation of others. He is careful not to diminish the seriousness of his own pursuit of heaven by frequent frivolous behavior. He must demonstrate constantly that his mind is “set...on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2);

- m. **Just** [*dikaios*-- “observing things in accord with right”]. This quality is similar to “righteous,” a state of being right. The English “just” can be a synonym for “fair.” An elder’s decisions and dealings with other men must be fair and impartial in all things (James 3:17). He will treat others as he expects God to treat him both now and hereafter;
- n. **Holy** [*hosios*-- “religiously right, as opposed to what is unrighteous or polluted”]. As guardian of the flock, the elder/shepherd must ever be cautious about the purity of teaching and practice in his congregation. His task is to “be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict” (verse 9). He is consumed with the desire to “buy [embrace] the truth” and his greatest aversion is to “sell [abandon] it” (Prov. 23:23);
- o. **Self-controlled**. The fact that an elder is “elder” should tend to make him deliberate and studied in his decisions and actions. The rashness of youth should be behind him as he weighs the values of alternative solutions to both congregational and individual problems. His personal habits and deportment must be as well-regulated as his deliberations. He must give due diligence to the tasks at hand, and he must leave no eventuality to chance or inaction;
- p. **Steadfast [holding fast] to the faithful word**. An elder must not be moved away from the simple truth by the winds of false doctrine, nor can he be weakened in his commitment to the truth because of the disloyalties of weak brethren. His resolve to serve the Lord faithfully and to remain a good example for others is only strengthened when he witnesses the irresoluteness of disciples less dedicated to Christ than himself. Only by cleaving to sound doctrine can he “save both himself and those who hear” him (1Tim. 4:16). Holding fast to the faithful word will enable him both to exhort those trying to do what is right and to convict [expose] those whose efforts contradict things that are right. [NOTE-- Additional material on elders’ qualifications is available in the workbook on First Timothy, pp. 26-32.]

Verses 10-16-- THE CHARGE TO TITUS-- STOP THE MOUTHS

1. There were “many” in Crete who were doing damage to the cause of Christ. All were “insubordinate” to the authority of the message that Paul, Titus, and others had been preaching on the island.
2. Some among the opposition were “idle talkers,” whose words were “vain” and of little value to anyone. They distracted truth-seekers from their search by dwelling on unimportant minutiae (Matt. 23:24) or undisclosed revelation (Deut. 29:29). They chose to concentrate their religious discussions on the intricacies of “food and drink” to the

neglect of “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17).

3. Other hurtful persons were “deceivers.” These, mostly from among the Jewish population, were probably active in outright opposition to the sound doctrine of the apostles. They substituted their Jewish fables (verse 14) for the plain realities of the gospel truth. These fables, strange and unbelievable to the rational mind, could be dressed in the trappings of human appeal and made attractive to disciples who were only partially converted.
4. Not only were the the deceivers false in teaching things which they should not but also their motivation was wrong. They were far less interested in the honest pursuit of souls than in the dishonest gain of money and reputation. Their activities were despicable in every way. Albert Barnes observes:

For gain. That is, they inculcate such doctrines as will make themselves popular, and as will give them access to the confidence of the people. They make it their first object to acquire influence as ministers of religion, and then abuse that to obtain money from the people. This they would doubtless do under many pretenses; such as that it was needful for the support of the gospel, or for the relief of the poor, or perhaps for the assistance of distant Christians in persecution. Religion is the most powerful principle that ever governs the mind; and if a man has control of *that*, it is no difficult thing to induce men to give up their worldly possessions. In all ages there have been imposters who have taken advantage of the powerful principle of religion to obtain money from their deluded followers. No people can be too vigilant in regard to pretended religious teachers; and while it is their duty to contribute liberally for the support of the gospel, and the promotion of every good cause, it is *no less* their duty to examine with care every proposed object of benevolence, and to watch with an eagle eye those who have the disbursement of the charities of the church.

5. Unfortunately, sincerity is not always the reason for the success of religious teachers. In spite of their fraudulent message and their deceptive methods, the impostors in Crete were meeting with disturbing success. “Whole households” were being swept away by their subterfuge. The spiritual health of the body of Christ was in jeopardy.
6. Titus and other faithful brethren must stop the mouths of these disloyal workers *at once!* Paul’s call to arms was not a call to “war in the flesh” (2Cor. 10:3). Instead, loyal saints had weapons of truth, some of which possibly were miraculous in nature, that were “mighty in God for pulling down strongholds” of error and exposing every argument and untrue statement that opponents might raise against sound doctrine (2Cor. 10:4,5). The time had come for an all-out offensive against the forces of deceit and destruction!
7. The conduct of these enemies of the gospel was not surprising to those familiar with the historic behavior of Crete’s inhabitants. Even one of their own poets, the venerated Epimenides, had spoken disparagingly of his fellow Cretans when he accused them of pervasive lying, bestial conduct, laziness, and gluttony. A more unflattering description of a people can hardly be found in all of ancient literature. But Paul, who by observation in his travels throughout the island was familiar with the charac-

ter and disposition of the natives, didn't hesitate to agree with the poet's indictment of his own countrymen. "It is true." Neither pagan poet nor prominent preacher would expect the majority of Cretans to be interested in the message of self-restraint and sacrifice that was offered to the populace in the gospel of Jesus (e.g., Mark 8:34-38).

8. Sharp rebuke was in order for these false workers. It is sometimes appropriate to use gentle approaches to those in error if they are sincere in their convictions (2Tim. 2:24). Paul instructed Timothy to both "reprove" and "rebuke" (2Tim. 2:2). Reproof assumes that the offender is ignorant of the truth and is in need of further teaching. Rebuke is in order when it is evident that the offender is aware of his error and needs to understand that it will not be tolerated. Gentleness in this situation would likely be ineffective. Jude advised, "And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh" (Jude 22,23).
9. Hopefully, rebuking these false teachers would have two positive results:
 - a. Well-intentioned disciples would be shielded from their destructive work and would continue to be sound in "the faith" taught by the apostles (Gal. 1:23);
 - b. Saints would reject any need to respond to the Jewish fables and commandments of men by which the false teachers wanted them to be governed.
10. The apostle apparently has in mind the ceremonial exercises of Moses' law that still found favor in the teaching of the Judaizers who troubled many of the churches of the first century. The Lord had freed His disciples from observing these oppressive rituals (Col. 2:14-17), but the Judaizers persisted in their claim that salvation was available only to those who respected the ordinances of the old Law (Acts 15:5). Disciples whose understanding of God's present truth was "pure," i.e., not corrupted by extraneous doctrines brought forward from the old religions of Jews and Gentiles, would have no problem with ordinances and practices that now were "pure" [of no consequence] to New Testament Christians (Col. 2:16, 21-23; 1Tim. 4:3-5).
11. Those individuals who would not distinguish between the new law of the gospel and the old laws formerly practiced by Jews and Gentiles were especially effective in turning disciples from the truth. Minds polluted by false concepts and consciences defiled by unworthy motives allowed them deliberately to destroy the faith of disciples in a stand-alone gospel that must remain unmixed with the remnants of defunct religions (Gal. 1:6,7).
12. False teachers always profess to "know God," but their claims are openly denied by their actions. Scripture says in 1John 2:3,4:

Now by this we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. Such insincerity makes imposters "abominable" ["detestable, loathesome, hateful"] to the God they profess to serve. Their disobedience in perverting the sacred gospel for selfish purposes disqualifies them from being credited for any "good works" they might do.

1. Paul's gospel was according to the _____ of the _____ and the _____ of the _____.
2. _____, who cannot _____, promised _____ before _____ began.
3. God's word was to be _____ by _____. This task was _____ to Paul by Jesus' _____.
4. What two duties did Paul place on Titus when he left him in Crete?
 - a.
 - b.
5. In listing elders' qualifications, what word is used both generally and specifically?
6. "Holding the faithful word" will enable elders to do two things:
 - a.
 - b.
7. False teachers in Crete were _____, _____, and _____.
8. How successful were these teachers in their evil work?
9. Cretans were characterized as _____, _____, and _____ by one of their own _____.
10. Rebuking the false teachers would encourage others in Crete to do what?
 - a.
 - b.
11. To the _____ everything is _____, but to the _____ and _____ nothing is _____.
12. Some professed to _____, but actually were _____, _____, and _____ for _____ works.

Chapter Two

Verses 1-10-- SPEAKING SOUND DOCTRINE-- ABOUT CHRISTIAN CONDUCT

1. Some things are “proper” for [“befit”] sound doctrine. *Prepo* [“befit”] means “to be conspicuous among a number, eminent, distinguished by a thing.” Things proper to sound doctrine are appropriate to its purposes. Often, we associate only things taught about primary obedience and the worship, work, and organization of the church as constituting the “sound doctrine” of the apostles.
2. This passage identifies other matters also as “proper” for the sound doctrine that Titus must speak to the churches in Crete. Rather than relating to the collective activity of the disciples, these matters involved their individual behavior toward one another as they lived together as members of the same spiritual organization. Paul’s instructions are directed toward *five* classifications of Christians in the churches.
3. The first group that should give attention to *practicing* sound doctrine was the *older men*. Substantial spiritual growth is expected in persons who have been Christians for a comparatively long time (Heb. 5:12). They should be equipped to serve as role models for younger church members in every aspect of life in Christ. They ought to be stabilizing influences in their congregations, and they should be the individuals who are held up before the world as best exemplifying the blessings and benefits of serving the Lord Jesus Christ. These men are called “aged men” in the KJV and the ASV; “older men” in the RSV; and “elderly men” in the Confraternity [Catholic] Version. “Aged” is *presbutes*, “an elderly man.” It is akin to *presbyteros*, which is the term applied to the shepherds of local churches. But these older men are not the ones who have been “appointed” and who serve officially over churches. Qualifications for those “elders” have already been prescribed by Paul (1:6-9). It was their office and not their age alone that allowed them to assist Titus in his task of stopping the mouths of ungodly teachers. The characteristics that should be displayed by these older Christian men were:
 - a. Sober [*nephalios*-- “sober, temperate, abstinent (esp. in respect to wine), sober-minded, watchful” (Robinson)]. Abstinence from strong drink is a necessary prerequisite to keeping the mind in a condition of watchfulness and carefulness about one’s conduct as a Christian whose example can be safely imitated (1Cor. 11:1);
 - b. Reverent [*semnos*-- “reverend, august, venerable; then, serious, grave”]. “Serious” minds are compatible with “serious” [sound] doctrine. Flippant attitudes and irreverent conduct are out of tune with the seriousness of the gospel message [e.g., Acts 17:30,31]. As eternity draws nearer for older people, the realities of life and death, time and eternity, and heaven and hell should become increasingly sobering

- influences on the minds and hearts of the aged;
- c. **Temperate** [*sophron*-- “curbing one’s desires and impulses, self-controlled”]. As with “seriousness” [above], self-control of desires and impulses should become more pronounced in one’s character as one advances in age. Moreover, some impulses of youth tend to become weaker in the latter years;
 - d. **Sound in faith**. “Faith” is accompanied here by the article, “the.” Sound doctrine is the source of sound faith (Eph. 5:17). “By reason of the time” (Heb. 5:12, ASV) older men should become the teachers of younger men, but this relationship is appropriate only when they have developed a command of the sound teaching of the apostles. As Paul and other inspired men approached the end of their useful lives in the kingdom, it was increasingly important that they leave behind others who in succession could transmit the word of truth to future generations (2Tim. 2:2). It was imperative that *mature* Christians should bear much of that responsibility;
 - e. **Love**. In company with the appointed elders [*presbuteros*] of the local churches, the older men were “father figures” whose concern for the young caused them to dedicate themselves to the well-being of younger Christians. Maturity and experience impart a carefulness of action and a sensitivity to danger that are often lacking in the junior members of a congregation. Those same qualities also allow older men to provide a unique level of encouragement and support to younger people as they try, despite their youth, to grow into productive servants in the Lord’s work;
 - f. **Patience** [*hupomone*-- “an abiding under”]. Patience discourages rash, hasty, and hurtful actions that can be destructive to the confidence and ambitions of the young. Elder disciples can be invaluable in providing input into decisions about handling problems related to younger members of a local church. Patience sometimes is a *key factor* in seeing young people safely through the difficulties of their youth while helping them to retain their commitment to Christ and His church in spite of discouraging circumstances in their lives.
4. The second group of disciples whose good conduct was crucial to the effectiveness of the apostles’ sound doctrine was the *older women*. Their contribution to the stability and godliness of local churches was no less important than that of their counterparts among the men. Women, both young and old, can provide crucial services to the cause of Christ that are unavailable elsewhere. In particular, older women possess a wisdom born of experience that can assist younger women in assuring that their homes will be happy and their marriages secure. This potential service was Paul’s emphasis in this passage, where he urged mature women to be:
- a. **Reverent in behavior**. The same seriousness expected of older men [3.b., above] was also vital to the disposition of mature ladies in the churches;
 - b. **Not slanderers** [*diabolos*-- adj., “accusing falsely”]. This is the same word that describes the character of the devil thirty-four times (e.g., Rev. 12:10). Perhaps that indicates the gravity of spreading the gossip and rumors that can so easily invade

the conversations in which disciples engage with one another and which can so quickly damage or destroy the reputations of the innocent. Paul's warning to the older women possibly also indicates that the females in a congregation sometimes are more normally susceptible to this practice than the males;

- c. **Not given to much wine.** Older men were instructed to be "sober" (verse 2), which by common usage of the term discouraged any significant use of strong drink. [See 3.a., above.] However, the prohibition of being "slaves to drink" [RSV] is laid out here in plain language. Perhaps female influence was more quickly and more completely destroyed by drunkenness than that of men among the people of Crete. The Expositor's Greek Testament ventures the opinion that "it is proved by experience that the reclamation of a woman drunkard is almost impossible," but that estimation is likely exaggerated in our time. Adam Clarke offers these thoughts about women and wine among the pagans:

Both among the Greeks and Romans old women were generally reputed to be fond of much wine; hence the ancient scholiast on Homer, II. vi., speaking of old women, says: [Greek text here], *At this age they delight in wine*; which words Ovid seems to have translated literally: [Greek text here]. It is likely, therefore, that it was customary among the elderly women, both Greeks and Romans, to drink much wine; and because it was inconsistent with that *moderation* which the Gospel requires, the apostle forbids it; doubtless it was not considered criminal among them, because it was a common practice; and we know that the Greek philosophers and physicians, who denied wine to young persons, judged it to be necessary for the aged;

- d. **Teachers of good things.** Although women are restrained from participating in the public teaching activities of the church (1Tim. 2:11,12), they occupy a unique role as teachers of other women, especially *younger women*. There are numerous "good things" that young wives and mothers need to learn that will enhance the "soundness" of their marriages and of their homes, which in turn will enhance the good influence of the sound doctrine which they espouse before the world. Paul calls attention to several crucial lessons to be taught by older women to younger women. The latter were, of course, obligated to learn these lessons and to practice them in their contacts with their mates and offspring:

- (1) **Love their husbands.** It is assumed that young wives will normally possess the romantic love that is fundamental to the initiation of a marriage. However, young wives often must learn *after* the wedding ceremony how their tender feelings are to be expressed to their husbands in practical, necessary actions. Certain things must be done by wives in the home for the physical and emotional well-being of their husbands. Every young wife's duty to her husband must always be to "do him good" in every way, ranging from maintaining an orderly environment to sewing buttons on his shirts. Such skills must be learned, and they may be most readily learned under the tutelage of an older, more experienced woman;

- (2) *Love their children.* In much the same way as with their husbands, wives bear a responsibility for assuring that feelings of parental love are demonstrated in ways that are truly in the best interests of their children. Lessons about how to properly care for childrens' physical and emotional needs, how to train them in acceptable behavior, and how to exercise appropriate discipline when conduct turns sour, are usually among the treasures that experience has deposited over time into the accounts of mature women. What a grand opportunity for young mothers to be able to draw freely from those accounts and avoid many of the mistakes that are inevitable for the untaught;
- (3) *To be discreet* [*sophron*-- "of sound mind, self-controlled"]. This is the same word translated "temperate" when applied to older men. [See 3.c., above.] The rigors of child-rearing often pose grave threats to self-control. A mother's temperance in dealing with her children and with her husband is crucial to family health and godliness. The encouraging guidance of a wise older woman can often mean the difference between success and failure in surviving the challenging situations that arise in families;
- (4) *To be chaste* [*hagnos*-- "pure from every fault, immaculate"]. Moral purity is indicated by the same word in 2Cor. 11:2. Nothing can more quickly and completely devastate a home and a marriage than a mother's moral indiscretions. Children learn their best lessons about morality and decency at the feet of their mothers. In many homes, it is the wife alone who carries the banner of honorable conduct before the children, and it is she who is the last vestige of hope for moral purity in both home and nation;
- (5) *To be homemakers.* The ASV has, "workers at home"; the KJV, "keepers at home"; and the RSV, "domestic." It seems obvious that Paul's intent is to discourage married women from following the practice of the younger widows who went "from house to house,...saying things which they ought not" (1Tim. 5:13). To what extent his language will accommodate the modern woman's work outside her home is something that she must determine for herself, but it is clear that any such activity should not be allowed to keep her from the duties that are imposed on her by virtue of her position as wife and mother;
- (6) *To be good* [*agathos*-- "good in character and beneficial in effect"]. The ASV translates the word as, "kind." Wuest quotes Expositor's: "Mothers who work at home usually find it a more absorbing pleasure than 'going from house to house' (1Tim. 5:13). But the 'worker at home' is under temptation to be as unsparing of her household as of herself; and so St. Paul adds *agathos* 'kind' (R.V.) rather than 'good' (A.V.)." Patience and gentle kindness go far in reconciling the untidyness of children [and husbands!] with a wife's struggles to maintain an orderly environment in her home;

- (7) *Obedient to their own husbands.* This is sometimes the most difficult lesson of all for confident and capable young wives to learn. It may seem unnatural and illogical for a wife whose talents may actually surpass those of her husband to defer to his leadership in the family unit. But the Scriptures everywhere impose submission upon women [e.g., Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18], and the sage advice of older women can convince younger wives that accepting God's arrangement is conducive to harmony in the home. This natural line of authority was so widely recognized by the natives in Crete that any demonstration of insubordination by Christian women would be cause enough for outsiders to blaspheme God's word as being responsible for such conduct.
5. Next, young men are encouraged to be sober-minded [just as older men, verse one] in their behavior. This might be an especially hard task for some whose daily associates likely were much more interested in less serious matters than those which fill the minds of sincere and dedicated Christians. For this reason, the apostle warned the Corinthians, "Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits'" (1Cor. 15:33).
6. In his efforts to guide the behavior of other disciples into sound conduct that would benefit the sound doctrine of the gospel, Titus must not overlook the high standards by which his *own* deportment as a preacher would be judged by others.
- a. Show yourself a pattern of good works. "Good works" will often glorify God in the minds of sinners as nothing else can (Matt. 5:16). And the level of a disciple's dedication is frequently judged by the number of "good works and charitable deeds" attributed to him by interested observers (Acts 9:36,39). It was important that good works were seen as *typical* and not *occasional* in Titus' day-by-day activities. Both saints and sinners would view him as a person who was sincerely interested in both the physical and spiritual well-being of other people.
 - b. Show integrity [uncorruptness] in doctrine. Titus' main role was that of a preacher who had been given difficult work to do, work that could be accomplished only by a heavy dose of sound doctrine. Corrupting the purity of the truth would render it useless to "set in order the things that are lacking" in the churches (1:5). Regardless of how many other attractive qualities a preacher might bring to his ministry, he is an abject failure unless he proclaims the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) without fear or favor.
 - c. Show reverence. The same serious attitude toward the gospel and toward his task of preaching its precepts must be displayed by Titus as he was charged to require of the members of his congregation(s). [See verses one and two.] Frivolous conduct and shallow attitudes can quickly diminish the gravity of the preacher's message of damnation and salvation.
 - d. [Show incorruptibility]. The best versions omit this quality, which has already been treated in the listing of "integrity" in this same verse.

- e. **Show sound speech.** “Sound” speech reveals the mind of God to man (1Cor. 2:11). It is the speech spoken by the inspired apostles when they expressed the spiritual truths of salvation in the spiritual words given to them by the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 2:13). The vocabulary of the world cannot adequately portray the glorious realities of God’s heavenly message to the hearts of sinners. Titus’ speech, both in public and in private teaching, must remain true to the words of God’s word. Opponents cannot fairly condemn [*kataginosko*-- v., “to know something against”] such words without condemning the Lord who first spoke them. To condemn God would shame any man in the eyes of all honest and thoughtful people.
7. The last group of disciples addressed by Paul is *servants* [slaves]. Many of these were Christian slaves serving in pagan households [Wuest]. Obedience, though difficult, was imperative for the sake of the gospel. Their service should be marked by:
- Efforts to please their masters** “in all things.” This injunction, of course, acknowledged the never-changing principle for *all* saints that “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29), and compromises with pagan error should be avoided;
 - Action instead of reaction.** The duty of slaves was to serve, not to advise or to alter decisions made by their masters. Expressing dissatisfaction with work assignments or protesting the conditions surrounding the services performed likely were also included in the prohibition to “answer back”;
 - Honesty.** Servants were not to “pilfer” [“purloin,” ASV, RSV]. The Greek word is *nosphizo*-- “to keep for oneself.” Expositor’s says “the particular form of theft implied is the abstraction or retention for one’s self, of a part of something trusted in one’s care.” “Pilfer” is a more modern term that expresses the meaning well;
 - Showing faithfulness.** Faithfulness is a quality fundamental to the Christian life. It is attached to the performance of every Christian duty. We are to be faithful in the tasks assigned to us just as Christ has been in those He has undertaken in our behalf. “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised *is faithful*” (Heb. 10:23). Responsibilities both pleasant and unpleasant are to be met with the best effort we can give to the task (Col. 3:23). A constant display of good conduct will “adorn” [*kosmeo*-- “to arrange, put in order” (English-- “cosmetic”)] the [sound] doctrine of God and make it more appealing to unbelievers who observe the fidelity of the Lord’s servants.

Verses 11-14-- SPEAKING SOUND DOCTRINE-- ABOUT THE DEMANDS OF GRACE

- It is believed that the false teachers in Crete, like so many impostors of the first century, placed little importance in their teaching on moral and beneficent living. In fact, many of them personally were of dissolute character that they exhibited by immoral conduct.
- Some of the things being taught, but which “ought not” to be taught at all (1:11), possibly encouraged loose behavior among the disciples. And the lives of Cretans, who

were already known for being “liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons” (1:12), would certainly not be improved through such fallacious garbage. It was important that both saints and sinners understand the importance of godly living in their quest for heaven.

3. “For by *grace* you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8), was Paul’s unchanging message wherever he preached the gospel. Neither Jew nor Gentile *deserved* anything from God except eternal suffering. Whatever hope of salvation was possessed by any man was the direct result of the merciful grace of the Lord and of His willingness to forgive and save man in spite of his sin and wickedness.
4. God’s *grace*, however, comes to man with a price. The cost of man’s salvation to God was the death of His Son; its cost to man is the death of his sinful self. Only by killing the old sinful self and by assuming the identity of a new and better self, dedicated to better conduct, is heaven possible for any man. False teachers have often found it to their advantage, however, to emphasize salvation’s cost to God and to minimize its cost to man. Apparently, this was the tactic being used in Crete by those who had caused this issue of godly living to be raised.
5. God’s grace had taught all men that salvation has two components. The first involves commands to be obeyed so that one may be saved from sin; the second, altogether as essential as the first, presents commands to be obeyed that one may continue to be saved. These demands for steadfastness that God’s grace makes on man *cannot* be ignored or neglected.
6. It was only because of God’s grace that His plan of salvation was *formulated*; it is also only because of the same grace that His plan has been *revealed* by gospel preaching. The Lord’s revelation of grace demands:
 - a. That men must deny ungodliness and worldly lusts (1John 2:15-17);
 - b. That men must live now soberly, righteously, and godly;
 - c. That men should gladly pay the *cost* of salvation with a strong anticipation of the *reward* of salvation when Jesus returns to judge the world.
7. Jesus Christ is here referred to by Paul as “the great God and Savior.” Other passages also identify Jesus as “God” [e.g., John 1:1], contrary to the inferior roles assigned to Him by some of the false religions of the world. [See also verse 2:10.]
8. The promiscuous conduct being encouraged by the men-pleasers in Crete totally contradicted the very reason for which Jesus died on the cross. His great sacrifice procured an equally great benefit. Indeed, Paul declared:
 - a. It redeemed [*lutro*-- “to release on receipt of ransom”] lost men from [the penalty of] their lawless deeds;
 - b. It purified unfit sinners and made them fit to be His “special” people [“a people for His own possession,” ASV] who would bring Him glory through their service;
 - c. It heralded the extreme importance with which God regards “good works.” God’s

greatest pleasure was to offer redemption to a helpless race, even at the expense of the “good work” of His Son on Calvary. He still takes pleasure in offering “good works” to the world at the hands of His other sons as they sacrifice themselves to do good to those around them.

Verse 15-- SPEAKING SOUND DOCTRINE-- WITH AUTHORITY

1. Probably, it is the things just discussed, the things about righteous living, that Titus is commanded to speak. Three steps should be taken when he dealt with those who were diminishing the role of godliness in man’s salvation:
 - a. **Speak** [teach] the truths clearly that must be understood and obeyed. Some offenders might not really comprehend what is expected of them as saints nor grasp what consequences will follow those who continue to fall beneath that expectation;
 - b. **Exhort** the guilty to greater obedience. Sincere individuals will respond to being taught. They need only to be encouraged to do the right thing;
 - c. **Reprove** those who prove to be hardened in sin and insincere about serving the Lord. They need sharp rebuke (1:13) for both their transgressions and their hypocrisy. Even harsh treatment might not be adequate to turn them from their error, but at least other disciples under their influence might heed the warnings given and reform their ways before it became too late to help them.
2. In all his efforts to expose the errors of worldly teachers and to strengthen the disciples in the concepts of truth, Titus must exhibit an authority appropriate to a message originating at God’s own throne. The demands of his teaching were not *optional* for anyone; the high standards of morality in the gospel were *essential* for everyone. In view of this, Titus must not allow his hearers to challenge his mandates as if they were human opinions. His absolute authority to deliver God’s laws must not be “despised” [*periphrono*-- lit., “to think round a thing, to turn over in the mind”; hence, “to have thoughts beyond, to despise”]. Paul’s injunction was not directed at any personal animosity others might have toward Titus. Rather, it forbade attacks on the sacred doctrine he brought in his preaching of the gospel to the people of Crete. The Lord’s commands were not subject to negotiation!

1. Titus was told to speak things _____ for _____.
2. What *groups* were instructed about how to live according to sound doctrine?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
3. What *individual* was also admonished about his/her lifestyle? _____
4. Which persons were commanded to be “reverent” in their behavior?
5. What favorable result would come from young women conducting themselves properly?
6. What effects would Titus’ good behavior have on opponents of the gospel?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
7. Servants were *not* to do *two* things. What were they?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
8. There are *two* effects on the gospel caused by good and bad conduct. What are they?
 - a. Good: _____
 - b. Bad: _____
9. God’s grace teaches us that we must do *seven* things:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
 - f. _____
 - g. _____
10. What *two* characteristics of Jesus are stated by Paul in this chapter?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
11. Jesus’ death makes *two* things possible for His people. What are they?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
12. What particular responsibility of God’s people does Paul stress?
13. Titus was to do *three* things in correcting the error being taught in Crete:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
14. In what way were people not allowed to “despise” Titus?

Chapter Three

Verses 1-8-- ENCOURAGING GOOD WORKS-- BY ALL CHRISTIANS

1. There were several things more about which the members of the churches in Crete should be reminded. Paul has already instructed Titus about several matters that he must bring to the attention of various segments of the church population:
 - a. Some were acting deceitfully and teaching things they ought not as a means of dishonest gain. Their deviations from sound doctrine should be rehearsed, and they should be rebuked sharply and their mouths stopped (1:9-16);
 - b. Others were endeavoring to remain faithful to the truth, and their minds should be focused on behaving themselves as disciples in ways that would adorn the doctrine of God. Older men and women, younger men, and servants should all be reminded about particular areas of conduct in which they should excel if they were to glorify the Lord before the world (2:1-6, 9, 10);
 - c. There were certain areas of his work as a preacher to which Titus also should give special notice. His pattern of words and his works as a teacher must be “good” enough that his critics could not justly accuse him of sinful practices or of neglecting his duty (2:7, 8);
 - d. The entire body of believers should be reminded of their obligation to deny ungodliness and to lead righteous lives in view of the coming of Christ and His final judgment of their behavior (2:11-14).
2. “Them” apparently refers to the entire number of Christians who were sincere and teachable. The native character of Cretans was notoriously bad, and it was important that the Lord’s people demonstrate strongly that character can be significantly improved by the gospel which Paul and Titus were preaching over the island.
3. Cretans were particularly deficient in their relationships with persons of authority. A spirit of self-determination and independence accompanied the other vices for which they were disparaged by other peoples. Rebellion instead of submission appears to have been their usual response to the actions of those responsible for the governance of their nation.
4. Obedience to “rulers” [*arche*-- “the first place, the rule, the magistracy”] who exercised the highest authority and submission to lesser “authorities” [“powers,” KJV] to whom rule had been delegated were both actions necessary in the daily life of every disciple. *Lesser* officials were as much to be respected in their offices as those who were highest in power. Every civil officer could trace the origin of his authority to God (Rom. 13:1).
5. Lip service to civil authority was not enough. Christians must be cautioned that their obedience must be real. Their readiness to cooperate in matters involving the common

welfare [“good works”] of the citizens of Crete must be well-known over the island. Verbally undermining the status of others by speaking evil of them was strictly forbidden, especially as it concerned men in places of public authority. Cretan Christians must not be known for caustic personalities and recalcitrant conduct as were so many of their countrymen. Instead, *gentleness* and *humility* toward other people would be their distinguishing characteristics as they tried to adorn the sound doctrine they taught by the lives they lived.

6. While these disciples were directed to be gentle and humble [meek] and to display a peaceable attitude toward *all* men, there was perhaps a special lesson intended about their relationship with men who occupied places of authority in government. Paul taught the Romans to submit themselves in obedience to both good and bad governments (Rom. 13). It is possible that these instructions about submitting to authorities are related to harsh practices that the people of Crete were made to endure at the hands of their rulers. If so, only a drastic change of heart would allow men accustomed to resisting authority to be gentle and humble toward their civil officers. “Showing humility” is “showing all *meekness*” in the ASV; the RSV has, “showing perfect courtesy.” R. C. Trench offers these thoughts about the drastic change that would elicit the meekness [*prautes*] encouraged here by the apostle:

The scriptural *praotes* (related word to *prautes*) is not in man’s outward behavior only; nor yet in his relations to his fellow-men; as little in his mere natural disposition. Rather it is an inwrought grace of the soul; and the exercises of it are first and chiefly towards God (Matt. 11:29; James 1:21). It is that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing and resisting; it is closely linked with *tapeinophrosune* (humility), and follows directly upon it (Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12; cf. Zech. 3:12); because it is only the humble heart which is also the meek; and which, as such, does not fight against God, and more or less struggle and contend with Him. This meekness, however, being first of all meekness before God, is also such in the face of men, even of evil men, out of a sense that these, with the insults and injuries which they may inflict, are permitted and employed by Him for the chastening and purifying of His elect. This was the root of David’s *praotes*, when Shemei cursed and flung stones at him-- the consideration that the Lord had bidden him (II Sam. 16:11), that it was just for him to suffer these things, however unjustly the other might inflict them; and out of like convictions all true Christian *praotes* must spring. He that is meek will know himself a sinner among sinners;... and this knowledge of his own sin will teach him to endure meekly the provocations with which they may provoke him, and not withdraw himself from the burdens which their sin may impose (Gal. 6:1; II Tim. 2:25; Tit. 2:2).

7. A calm demeanor and a humble attitude toward those whom we contact will always work to our advantage. This is what Paul wanted the Cretan Christians to see. To impress this lesson, he draws an analogy to which they should relate. Prior to their conversion, these saints had been in disrespect and rebellion against the authority of God. They had exercised their independence of thought and deed against the spiritual law of God in much the same way that their countrymen were accustomed to behaving toward the civil law of their land.

8. While resisting the laws of God, these brethren had been in spiritual disarray. They were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. A worse condition of heart and soul could hardly be described. However, the answer to their great problem was *simple*. Submission to the Lord had made everything right that had been wrong in their lives. Humility and meekness on their part had accomplished what disobedience could never do. Obedience to the laws of the Lord had resulted in awesome benefits: spiritual justification and inheriting eternal life!
9. Paul's implication to these Cretans was that there were significant physical advantages to be enjoyed through their civil obedience to the laws of men as there had been inestimable spiritual blessings that had come through submission to the laws of God.
10. Obviously, there were substantial irregularities in Paul's analogy, of which he was doubtless aware:
 - a. Relationships between God, civil governments, and their subjects were different. While the nature of governance in Crete is unknown to us, the *kindness, love, and grace* of the Lord's administration were well known to the brethren;
 - b. It *would be* by their own works [submission] that the Cretans would deserve to receive a measure of physical peace and security. On the other hand, even complete obedience to God did not deserve His spiritual blessings. Civil authority views compliance with its laws as worthy of reward (Rom. 13:3), but spiritual rewards that follow obedience to God's laws are wholly of *grace* and not of *merit*;
 - c. The favors bestowed by civil governments may be fleeting. An ever-changing administration of the law may remove rewards previously given or change the status of rewards currently enjoyed. The nature of God is changeless (Heb. 13:8), and His promises to faithful people are never rescinded (2Tim. 1:12).
11. Paul's analogy calls attention to some basic facts about man's obedience to the gospel:
 - a. Salvation is altogether a New Testament phenomenon. The love and mercy of God had been graciously directed toward the human race in countless ways in the past. However, it was not until the Christ appeared in the form of a man that the Father's beneficence made provisions that were adequate for man's salvation. "For the law [of limited blessings] was given through Moses, but [saving] *grace and truth* came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17);
 - b. Salvation is wholly the issue of God's mercy and grace, but those favors are extended only to sinners who submit themselves to the acts of obedience He has commanded in the gospel. While it is *not* because of any works of [self] righteousness that men are saved, it *is* because of their doing the works prescribed in the gospel to make men righteous (Rom. 1:16,17) that the Lord chooses to save them. Thus, James declares, "You see that a man is justified by [God's] *works*, and *not* by faith only" (James 2:24).;
 - c. Paul specifies *two* elements that contribute to new spiritual life (2Cor. 5:17): a

washing of regeneration and a *renewing* of [by-- Conf.] the Holy Spirit. These are the same elements announced by Jesus early in His ministry on earth: “...unless one is born of *water* and the *Spirit*, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Clearly, Jesus bound both man’s visible washing [baptism] of his body in water and the real but invisible cleansing of his sin-soiled spirit by the power of God’s Spirit as *two* requirements of forgiveness that cannot be ignored;

- d. Scholars otherwise skilled in Scripture studies make themselves foolish when they adamantly deny the role in salvation that both Jesus and Paul gave to water baptism. They write much about baptism being only a “symbol” of salvation that outwardly manifests the inward change of man’s heart by faith in Christ. But baptism is an integral *part of* and not a *symbol of* salvation from sin (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; etc.). Paul treated *both* the *washing* and the *renewing* equally as he tied both of them to man’s justification by grace. Baptism is not regeneration, but it is joined to regeneration, and regeneration is not completed in the sinner’s heart until he has been baptized.
12. The Holy Spirit had been “poured out” on the apostles at Pentecost, in fulfillment of Joel’s Old Testament prophecy (Joel 2:28f.; Acts 2:1-4, 16-21). The spiritual gifts of knowledge and teaching attended the coming of the Spirit. Those gifts allowed inspired men to take the gospel message to places such as Crete and offer lost men the “washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”
13. Paul concludes his analogy between civil obedience and spiritual submission by ordering Titus to “affirm constantly” that all believers should “maintain good works.” If the disciples truly believed in [appreciated] what God had done for them, and if they were convinced that their present spiritual condition had resulted from their obedience to His laws, then they should also be able to grasp the importance of complying with the laws of civil government. “These things” related to civil obedience were good and would bring them many benefits as citizens of Crete.
14. It is interesting to note how many times Paul speaks of “good works” in this epistle:
 - a. False teachers were disqualified for every good work (1:16);
 - b. Titus was to show a himself a pattern of good works (2:7);
 - c. God’s people should be zealous for good works (2:14);
 - d. The disciples were to be reminded to be ready for every good work (3:1);
 - e. Believers in God must maintain good works (3:8);
 - f. “Our people” must learn to maintain good works to be fruitful (3:14);
 - g. Works of man’s righteousness [good works] cannot save from sin (3:5).

Verses 9-11-- ENCOURAGING GOOD WORKS-- BY TITUS

1. Good works are not always involved with pleasant and positive activities. Titus was ordered in chapters one and two to participate in some things that would be good for
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the church. Such things were among the “good works” that Paul encouraged. But sometimes there are actions that must be taken to address problems that are negatively affecting the body of Christ. These matters may be extremely uncomfortable to deal with at times, but they should also be viewed as “good works” because they are as good for the spiritual health of the church as positive actions are.

2. There were several things that Paul told Titus to do:

- a. **Avoid foolish disputes** [zetesis-- “a seeking, search”]. Several versions have, “foolish questions [questioning].” It is likely that in searching for answers to foolish questions, men will fall into disputes about their findings. These foolish questions probably came from the Jewish impostors who were troubling the churches everywhere. They often imitated the conduct of eminent rabbis whose foolish questions and pointless discussions often dominated the writings to which the Jewish faithful resorted for their religious guidance. Adam Clarke records the following:

In these [foolish questions--RG] the Jews particularly delighted; they abounded in the most frivolous questions; and, as they had little piety *themselves*, they were solicitous to show that they had descended from *godly ancestors*.

Of their frivolous questions, and the answers given to them by the wisest and most reputable of their rabbins, the following is a specimen:---

Rabbi Hillel was asked: *Why have the Babylonians round heads?* To which he answered: This is a difficult question, but I will tell the reason: *Their heads are round because they have but little wit.*

Q. *Why are the eyes of the Tarmudians so soft?---*

A. *Because they inhabit a sandy country.*

Q. *Why have the Africans broad feet?---*

A. *Because they inhabit a marshy country...*

But ridiculous and trifling as these are, they are little in comparison with those solemnly proposed and gravely answered by those who are called the *schoolmen...*

These, with many thousands of others, of equal use to religion and common sense, may be found in their writings;

- b. **Avoid genealogies.** The genealogical records of the Jewish nation were cherished and jealously guarded. They carried the lineage of Israel’s Messiah and the documentation necessary for such things as priestly service and the physical connection of the Jewish population with such ancients as Abraham and David. Matthew and Luke both quote from the genealogy of Jesus in the opening chapters of their Gospels. Under the Mosaic covenant, genealogies played an important role in the history and conduct of the Israelite nation. But when obedience to the Law was terminated by Jesus’ death on the cross, the emphasis of religion shifted from the flesh to the spirit. A man’s physical origins no longer matter. All men are equal in Christ, and genealogies have no part in determining one’s eligibility for salvation. Since they were no longer of any value, Paul urged that they be ignored. [It is reported that the Jewish genealogies were destroyed by the Romans along with the temple soon after these instructions were given];

- c. **Avoid contentions** [strifes, ASV]. Sharp disagreements tend to result in bad behavior by the disputants. Such conduct can be extremely harmful to the image that the church projects before the world. It is also personally damaging to those who participate in contentious situations;
 - d. **Avoid strivings about the law**. This probably refers to the Law of Moses, about which many Jews were radically jealous, even long after Christ had nailed it to His cross (Col. 2:14). Some converts to the gospel were not fully persuaded that the Law no longer was of any use to their spiritual development, and they often raised issues and caused problems about the Law in the local churches. Much of Paul's writing to Christians was devoted to making necessary distinctions and appropriate applications regarding the law of Moses and the law of Jesus Christ. Dwelling on matters of the Law, the apostle declares, is *unprofitable* and *useless*. Just **avoid it!**
3. It would sometimes be necessary to do more than simply *avoid* the hurtful activities that weak or insincere disciples found so appealing. Those who participated in the negative behavior condemned by Paul could easily become parties to the disruption of peace and unity in the congregation. Partisan feelings could be aroused and the brethren could choose to take "sides" in the ongoing disputes and wranglings. If serious breaches of harmony occurred, those responsible should be disciplined.
 4. Divisive members should be dealt with in a manner that was intended to reform both their attitudes and their conduct:
 - a. They should first be warned about the destructive effects of their disputations on the good name of the church and of the inevitable ill will that their controversies would cause within the congregation;
 - b. Upon failing to be deterred in their conduct, they should receive a second and sterner warning about the personal consequences that would be imposed on them if they continued their offensive behavior;
 - c. The church should **reject** them if they still showed no sign of repentance. This action by the congregation would culminate in withdrawing its fellowship from the offending brethren (2Thes. 3:14; 1Cor. 5:4,5).
 5. Persons who insist of having their own way, even when it puts the reputation of the church in jeopardy and threatens to destroy the peace and harmony of a brotherhood of believers, are "warped" ["perverted," ASV] in their perception of the unity of the church and of their responsibility to that unity. *Ekstrepho* [pervert] means, "to turn inside out; to change entirely". That exactly describes the twisted mind of a man who is willing to destroy a congregation in order to defend a cause of no consequence to anyone except himself. The KJV calls him a "heretic."
 6. These "warped" brethren sometimes become so caught up in their mistaken sense of loyalty to sound doctrine that they entangle themselves in situations they never intended. Many times they will be forced to recognize the mistakes they have made and the

harm they have done. They are “self-condemned,” but that doesn’t always mean that they will give up their spurious positions and try to undo what they have done. Harsh treatment by the church may still be the only remedy to the situation.

Verses 12-15-- CLOSING INSTRUCTIONS

1. Paul had left Titus in Crete to complete some important tasks (1:5). But now he wants him to leave the island and to come to Paul’s winter residence at Nicopolis [See the Introduction.]. We are not told any reason for this urgency [“be diligent to come”] to change the previous plans.
2. Either of two men, Artemas or Tychicus, would be sent, probably as a replacement for Titus in Crete. We know nothing more of Artemas, but Tychicus was one of Paul’s companions when he returned through Macedonia in Acts 20:4 and was mentioned frequently as the apostle’s messenger to various places (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7; 2Tim. 4:12).
3. It appears that Zenas, a lawyer [student of Jewish law], was traveling in company with the well-known Apollos at the time of Paul’s writing. The two evidently were also bound for Paul’s winter home, and he desired that they come “with haste.” It may be that some urgent task needed the attention of all three disciples for whose presence he was anxious. Titus and the disciples in Crete should assist these brethren in every way possible when they passed through Crete that their journey might quickly be completed.
4. Assistance to these two travelers was an example of the “good works” that Paul had urged upon Titus and the brethren he served in Crete. “Our people” must respond quickly to meet urgent needs [such as Apollos and Zenas presented]. Bearing the “fruit” of good deeds to other people would result in a rich harvest of blessings from the Lord (2Cor. 9:10).
5. Paul’s final words to Titus are warm and cordial. While declining to name each person in his company individually, he sends a “group greeting” to Titus from brethren Titus appreciated and who appreciated him. Also, he asks that his personal greetings be routed through Titus to those disciples in Crete whom he loved and who loved him. These were Christians with whom he had labored in the gospel. They had studied together and had stood together for sound doctrine. They probably had laughed together in happiness and cried together in sorrow. They had together forged strong bonds of affection and admiration. They were all brethren and all God’s children.
6. No more precious blessing could Paul wish for these beloved saints in Crete than the *grace of God*. That would be blessing enough to see them through every test of their faith, and it would be abundant enough to supply their every need until both he and they would stand together in judgment to hear that welcome invitation, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).

1. Obedience to _____ and _____ was a part of the _____
_____ required of Christians in Crete.
2. Disciples were commanded to be _____ and _____ and to
be _____ toward _____.
3. What were the bad behaviors of the Cretans before their conversions?
a. _____ d. _____
b. _____ e. _____
c. _____ f. _____
4. God displayed _____ and _____ toward such wicked men and
_____ them .
5. Salvation was brought about by the _____ of _____ and
the _____ of the Holy Spirit.
6. Can you cite other passages that bear on the meaning of the statement in question 5?
7. Upon whom did the Lord “pour out” the Holy Spirit? When?
8. _____ people become _____ of the _____ of
eternal _____.
9. Believers should maintain _____ because they are _____
and _____.
10. The “bad works” listed in verse 9 should be _____ because they are
_____ and _____.
11. Of the men mentioned in Paul’s closing remarks, which are the better or lesser known?
Better known: a. _____ b. _____
Lesser known: a. _____ b. _____
12. Our good works are to meet _____ and will make us
_____ in God’s kingdom.

A PERSONAL LETTER

TO

PHILEMON

“A Beloved Friend and Fellow Laborer”

WITH CLASS QUESTIONS

By: Reg Ginn

INTRODUCTION TO PHILEMON

The Persons:

Three persons play prominent roles in this epistle, one actively and two passively. The apostle Paul, of course, is the central figure of interest. He writes this letter from a Roman prison, and his writing springs out of his incessant labors in teaching lost people and bringing them to Christ. The second individual of note in the letter is its recipient, Philemon, who at some time in the past had been converted by Paul. Philemon was the owner of a runaway slave named Onesimus, the third person of importance in the epistle. Onesimus also had been converted by the apostle when he came to the city of Rome. Other individuals are mentioned by name, but they play no real part in the unfolding of the message contained in the letter.

The History:

Much of the background of this letter is obscure and can only be supposed from what is said in the text. Certain facts surrounding the writing of the letter are clear. It is certain that Paul was a prisoner (vs. 1) and that he wrote to Philemon, a faithful Christian (vs. 4-7) who owned a slave, Onesimus, who had run away and had come to Rome (vs. 10), where he had been converted by Paul (vs. 10). The apostle was sending Onesimus back to his master (vs. 12) and wanted Philemon to treat him now as a brother in the Lord (vs. 15,16).

Other things in which we might be interested are unrevealed to us. We do not know the circumstances surrounding Onesimus' leaving Philemon's service. We can only wonder how he came to Rome, what events may have brought him to meet Paul, how his conversion came about, and in what ways he had been useful to the apostle following his experience with the gospel. And, most of all, we might wish to know about Philemon's reception of his runaway slave after he returned home. But while such things are kept from us, the limited facts that are revealed can give us valuable insights into Paul's private character and into the practice of slavery as it existed in the pagan world of the first century.

The Purpose:

The reason for this personal communication from Paul to his close friend and brother in the Lord is obvious from its content. After the mutual decision was reached that Onesimus

should return to his master, Paul's main concern was that the slave should be treated well by Philemon as a human being and as a highly respected fellow Christian. Rather than to leave this to chance, Paul thought to inject his personal influence into this master/slave relationship and to assure Onesimus' well being insofar as he could. As usual, the great apostle intended that his actions in this situation might benefit everyone involved: the named individuals and the church that met in Philemon's house (vs. 2).

The Place and Time:

Philemon is one of Paul's four "prison epistles" written during his Roman captivity. The others are Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. His letter to the church at Colosse was carried from Rome by Tychicus (Col. 4:7,8), who was accompanied by Onesimus on his journey home (Col. 4:9). This letter to Philemon was also dispatched at the same time. These facts date the letter to 60-61 A.D., toward the end of the apostle's confinement. The twenty-second verse of the epistle discloses Paul's expectation of an impending release and of a visit with Philemon and others of his acquaintance in Colosse.

The Significance

Philemon is the briefest of Paul's letters, having only 334 words in the Greek text. But it is "a model of courtesy, discretion, and loving concern for the forgiveness of one who would otherwise face severe consequences" (Nelson's Book of Bible Maps and Charts).

Conybeare and Howson give this assessment of the letter's importance:

This letter is not only a beautiful illustration of the character of St. Paul, but also a practical commentary upon the precepts concerning the mutual relationships of slaves and masters given in his contemporary Epistles. We see here one of the earliest examples of the mode in which Christianity operated upon these relations; not by any violent disruption of the organization of society, such as could only have produced another Servile War, but by gradually leavening and interpenetrating society with the spirit of a religion which recognized the equality of all men in the sight of God.

A similar opinion of the uniqueness of the letter is held by Albert Barnes:

This letter is almost wholly of a private character, and yet there is scarcely any portion of the New Testament of equal length which is of more value. It is exquisitely beautiful and delicate. It is a model of courtesy and politeness. It presents the character of the author in a most amiable light, and shows what true religion will produce in causing genuine refinement of thought and language. It is gentle and persuasive, and yet the argument is one that we should suppose would have been, and probably was, irresistible. It is very easy to conceive that the task which the apostle undertook to perform was one which it would be difficult to accomplish-- that of reconciling an offended master to a runaway servant. And yet it is done with so much kindness, persuasiveness, gentleness, and true affection, that, as the letter was read, it is easy to imagine that all the hostility of the master was disarmed, and we can almost see him desiring to embrace him who bore it, not now as a servant but as a Christian brother, ver. 16.

Finally, Adam Clarke comments on the critical impact of this small book on the thinking of many generations of Bible readers:

It may be thought strange that a short letter, written entirely on a *private subject*, without reference to the proof or defense of any *doctrine* of the Gospel, should, by the general consent of the Church of God, from the highest Christian antiquity, have been received into the sacred canon, not only as a genuine production of St. Paul, but as a piece designed by the Holy Spirit for the edification of the Church. However, such is the fact; and we may add, that this very piece was held so sacred that even the ancient heretics did not attempt to impugn its authenticity or corrupt its matter, while making dangerously free with the four gospels, and all the other epistles.

The Outline:

Philemon

- I. Introduction. 1-3
- II. Paul's commendation of Philemon. 4-7
- III. Paul's appeal for Onesimus. 8-16
- IV. Paul's expectations of Philemon. 17-21
- V. Closing remarks. 22-24

[All scripture quotations and references in this study, including class questions, are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.]

PHILEMON

Verses 1-3-- INTRODUCTION

1. Paul's usual greeting includes some reference to his apostleship. Here, however, he refrains from any appeal to apostolic authority for what he is about to write. This is easily understood because his tone in this letter to Philemon will be marked by an *appeal* instead of a *demand*.
2. It is likely that Philemon already knew about Paul's imprisonment in a Roman jail. The apostle's reference to this condition would be superfluous except for his intention to use it as a appeal to Philemon's conscience, which he believed would lead his friend to an appropriate decision about his appeal for Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave.
3. It is thought that Philemon was personally acquainted with Timothy and that they had worked together in the gospel at Colosse (Col. 1:1ff.). Adding Timothy's name to his greeting would no doubt give considerable personal weight to the request Paul was about to make in this letter.
4. Philemon, whose name means "affectionate" or "beloved," from *philema*, "a kiss," had obviously earned a place of high regard in the apostle's heart. He was deeply loved as a *friend* and genuinely respected as a *fellow laborer* in the kingdom of Christ. While his accomplishments as a Christian are nowhere else recorded, they are recognized and warmly commended by Paul in the verses that follow.
5. Two other individuals are included in this greeting. Apphia [*Appha*-- "the affectionate address of a brother or sister; or the diminutive of a brother or sister, used to express kindness and affection"] is thought to have been Philemon's wife. Some of the better texts call her "our *sister* Apphia." She, too, was "beloved" by Paul and others in the church of God. Archipus is admonished in Colossians 4:17, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." Just what form his "ministry" [service] took we are not told. Some think he was a bishop of the church at Colosse; others hold that he was an evangelist and fellow soldier like Timothy (2Tim. 4:5; 2:3). Additionally, many scholars regard him as Philemon's son and a member of his household.
6. A church met in Philemon's home, which was a common arrangement in the first century [e.g., Col. 4:15]. Some infer this to mean, in company with other facts known about him, that Philemon was a man of means who freely shared his wealth with other Christians.

Verses 4-7-- PAUL'S COMMENDATION OF PHILEMON

1. It was common for Paul to refer to his prayers in behalf of his brethren in Christ. We can only imagine how often and how long the apostle engaged in prayers, which he often described in terms of "always," "night and day," and "unceasing" (e.g., Rom. 1:9; Col. 1:3; 1:9; 2Tim. 1:3).
2. There were particular things about Philemon as the Lord's servant that had impressed Paul. Specifically, he possessed the two qualities most necessary to a productive life as a follower of the Savior. His great faith and love had often been shown toward both his Master and his fellow workers in the Lord.
3. Philemon seemingly had "shared his faith" both in word and in deed among the other saints at Colosse and [probably] elsewhere. There were many "good things" in him that should be "acknowledged" and appreciated by his brethren and that would make reports of his faith even more compelling to other people.
4. Philemon's loyal demonstration of faith and love had "refreshed" his brethren and had also brought great joy and comfort to Paul. Any effort the apostle had expended in Philemon's conversion had certainly *not* been in vain! He was the kind of "fruit" that always makes the labors of gospel teachers worthwhile!

Verses 8-16-- PAUL'S APPEAL FOR ONESIMUS

1. Having strengthened the bond of friendship and brotherhood that already existed between the two men by the fresh commendations he had just offered, Paul is now ready to introduce the matter of central concern in his writing to Philemon.
2. In a masterful contrast between his *authority* as an apostle and his *appeal* as a friend, Paul deftly opens the door for the request that will be the focus of this letter. An *appeal* to his better nature places the responsibility for choosing right from wrong squarely on the conscience of Philemon. A *command* for his compliance would have removed the accountability of choice from Philemon and placed it instead on the apostle. Consciences always benefit from being exercised to make the hard decisions that shape our lives as children of God.
3. Paul enhances his impending appeal by another reference to his imprisonment for the sake of Jesus Christ. He also cites advanced age as another reason for Philemon to embrace his request in behalf of Onesimus. Deference to older people has from antiquity been regarded as an indication of healthy moral values. Although scholarship regards Paul as probably being somewhere around sixty years old at this time, it is reasonable that the wear and tear on his body by the innumerable hardships he had endured in his work of spreading the truth throughout the world had aged him much more than had the simple passing of time. [See 2Cor. 11:23-33.]
4. The matter at hand is presented in a straightforward way: "I appeal to you for my son Onesimus..." Hardly a stronger plea could be made than one that came from a father in behalf of his own son. This new and unlikely father/son relationship between

Paul the *apostle* and Onesimus the *slave* was the same relationship that had existed for some time between Paul the *apostle* and Philemon the *slaveowner*. It is likely that Philemon took considerable satisfaction in knowing that he enjoyed a special bond with the God-sent man who had taught him and had taken him out of darkness and had introduced him into the kingdom of the Son of God's love (Col. 1:13). It must have been somewhat disconcerting for him to be told that his lowly, unprofitable slave now shared in the same precious affinities with Paul and with the heavenly Master that he himself had cherished. They were now both sons of the *same father!*

5. The details of how Onesimus had been "begotten" by Paul through obedience to the doctrine taught by Christ's ambassador in chains are uncertain. It is most likely that the slave had sought out the apostle, who was not free to search out students but who was allowed to receive freely those who came to him in his hired house (Acts 28:30). Some think that Paul was somewhat familiar to Onesimus from the apostle's previous contacts with his master Philemon.
 - a. If Onesimus was in physical distress or in want as a runaway slave, Paul might have been seen as someone who could provide some help.
 - b. If Onesimus was under attack from his own conscience on account of having badly treated his master, Paul might have been viewed as a religious man who would be able to guide him into an appropriate response to his guilt.
6. Conybeare and Howson comment on the unexpected contact between Paul and Onesimus and on the happy consequence of their meeting:

It is difficult to imagine any portion of mankind more utterly depraved than the associates among whom a runaway pagan slave must have found himself in the capital. Profligate and unprincipled as we know even the highest and most educated society to have then been, what must have been its dregs and offal? Yet from this lowest depth Onesimus was dragged forth by the hand of Christian love...However this may be, it is certain that Onesimus was led by the providence of God to listen to that preaching now which he had formerly despised. He was converted to the faith of Christ, and therefore to the morality of Christ. He confessed to St. Paul his sins against his master.

7. Onesimus' conversion to Jesus Christ had made a remarkable change in him. His bad attitude and uncooperative behavior as Philemon's slave had made him "unprofitable" to both his physical master and to himself. But the gospel is designed to alter negative feelings and rebellious conduct (1Thes. 2:13). Onesimus' name is said to mean "useful, profitable." It was probably not just a coincidence that Paul employs "unprofitable" and "profitable" in describing the change that had been wrought in Philemon's slave. Prior to his association with the high standards of the gospel, Onesimus' conduct was a travesty on the name he wore. But now, no name could better suit this "new man" who stood ready to fulfill his duties to both God and men, particularly to the master he had disappointed when he fled from him in abject disloyalty and ingratitude.
8. Because of the drastic change in Onesimus, Paul had determined to send him back to

his master. Onesimus doubtless concurred in this decision. Even so, it was a risky move on both their parts. Within the culture and legalities of their time, a slave who was returned to his master was subject to any treatment preferred by the owner. “It is estimated that one-third of the Roman world was in slavery” (Weliever). Situations similar to Onesimus’ were well-known and well-covered by Roman law. William Barclay says about the prospects faced by returned slaves:

If the slave ran away, at best he was branded on the forehead with the letter “F” which stood for *fugitivus*, which means runaway; at worst he was killed. The terror of the slave was that he was absolutely at the caprice of his master. Augustus crucified a slave because he killed a pet quail. Vadius Pollio flung a slave still living to the savage lampreys in his fish pond because he dropped and broke a goblet.

9. Nevertheless, Paul had enough confidence in the power of the gospel to change the hearts of both masters and slaves to cause him to believe that *love* would prove to be stronger than *law*, and *grace* would conquer *culture* when Philemon confronted his options in dealing with a penitent runaway. A converted *slaveowner* surely could be expected to behave as well as a converted *slave* in this effort to set things right between two brethren in Christ!
10. Paul’s “own heart” went with Onesimus. He would consider Philemon’s reception of Onesimus the same as receiving the apostle himself. What happened between them is just what he would have to occur between an apostle and an affluent slaveholder.
11. There was a practical as well as a spiritual reason for treating Onesimus well upon his reinstatement to Philemon’s household. The slave would now gladly provide the service to his master that he had withheld before. That had been demonstrated by the welcome service he had given to Paul in prison. In fact, Paul would have prolonged this arrangement if he could have been sure of Philemon’s wishes in the matter. But he would not presume to make another man’s choices for him.
12. Enough reasons had already been offered by Paul to justify his appeal for Onesimus’ well-being. However, one effective point remained unused in his case for merciful treatment. Perhaps God Himself had played a role in the departure and return of Onesimus. Maybe the Lord in His plan for this master and this slave had been responsible for their separation in anger and their reunion in love as members of the same spiritual body. It was quite possible that these circumstances had been arranged by the providence of heaven so that a lasting relationship could be forged between them that would not only greatly increase their appreciation of each other but also would be so superior to the usual master/slave relationship as to redound to the glory of God and the gospel. Good will would flow between them in both their physical [master/slave] and spiritual [brotherhood] ties.
13. Paul’s request that Onesimus be received “no longer as a slave but more than a slave” is significant. Three meanings are possible:
 - a. Onesimus should no longer be regarded as a slave. Any future service to Philemon

must be on a strictly voluntary basis, perhaps even as a paid worker in his former master's household;

- b. Preferably Onesimus should be sent back to Rome to serve Paul's needs in prison;
- c. Onesimus must no longer be seen [only] as a slave but [also] as a beloved brother.

Such an ellipsis is not unknown to the Scriptures and probably should be considered as the key to the apostle's intention in this situation. The master/slave connection between Philemon and Onesimus would continue, but on a different and far better basis than ever before. This likely is Paul's true meaning.

14. Slavery has existed in many cultures over many centuries of time. It was prevalent in many of the societies into which the gospel was taken by men preaching liberty from law and freedom from sin. Numerous instructions were given to Christians about how masters and slaves should behave themselves, but never once was any order given that would abolish the practice of slavery. It seems that inspired writers were concerned more with the *regulation* of slavery rather than with its *abolition*. Any sudden and violent upheaval of anti-slavery activity by Christians would only furnish a world given over to the maintenance of slavery good cause to seek the destruction of a religion dedicated to the dissolution of one of its most valued institutions.
15. It should have been obvious to all interested parties that while Christianity was not involved in the momentary *abolition* of slavery, it would become a prime force in the ultimate *voluntary* discontinuance of its practices through the potent influences of its high moral standards which should govern all relationships among men. No man could long pursue the precepts of Christ while continuing to dominate the lives of others he considered to be inferior to himself. The seeds of slavery's destruction were not to be found in the physical violence of men seeking to reform society but in the moral principles that permeate the teaching of the Savior who came to "preach deliverance to captives" of all kinds (Luke 4:18).

Verses 17-21-- PAUL'S EXPECTATIONS OF PHILEMON

1. The outcome of this situation was now altogether in the hands of Philemon. Both Paul and Onesimus had done what they could to close the wounds inflicted by bad conduct in the past. Now, better times lay ahead for both master and slave *IF* Philemon chose to follow Paul's advice to mend his fences with Onesimus.
2. Paul now skillfully injects his relationship with Philemon into the relationship he is trying to promote between the slaveowner and his slave. *IF* they are "partners" [*koinonos*-- "having in common"], then Philemon's course of action is clear. Since Paul and Onesimus are both equals as children in God's family, Philemon must treat the slave exactly as he would the apostle. What a happy prospect that would be for the runaway who otherwise had ample cause to fear for his life!
3. Lest he be perceived as taking advantage of Philemon's good conscience in this matter, Paul made a gracious and sincere offer to repay any tangible loss suffered by his

friend because of Onesimus' wayward behavior in the past. While his offer probably was unnecessary, it showed absolute good faith on the apostle's part. It only added to the impression that his *sole* interest was in the well-being of a brother in Christ who had come to him for assistance in a perplexing and dangerous situation.

4. Although Paul's offer to settle any account with Philemon was made in good faith, it seems he could hardly restrain himself from reminding his convert that, in all fairness, any debt between him and Philemon had already been more than paid in full. The value of "the whole world" cannot compare with the worth of one eternal soul (Mk. 8:36,37). On that basis, Paul's debts were *paid in advance*, no matter how much money might be involved in any other transaction.
5. The final appeal for Philemon's favorable response to his request in behalf of Onesimus was tied to his friend's warm feelings for his teacher and spiritual benefactor. Knowing that Philemon would give his slave even better treatment than he was asking of him, Paul's heart would be comforted and he could rejoice in the knowledge that both master and slave were better both physically and spiritually for his intervention into their affairs.

Verses 22-24-- CLOSING REMARKS

1. Paul was persuaded that he would soon be released from his imprisonment. He had plans to return to Colosse and to visit personally with Philemon and others there in whom he had a deep interest. This same optimism was expressed in Philippians 2:24 when he declared his expectation to come to Philippi to visit with the saints in that city.
2. One final request was in order to ask of Philemon. When he came again to Colosse, he would wish to reside as a guest in Philemon's home. It is probable that this man was known not only for having a hospitable nature but also for enjoying an affluence that allowed him to express his generous disposition by playing host to Christian travelers and others looking for temporary housing. Having a prearranged lodging would enable Paul to focus on other necessary things as he made his plans for extensive preaching following his release by the Roman authorities.
3. Epaphras, described by Paul as a "faithful minister" was, like Philemon, a resident of Colosse. He was with Paul in Rome when the letter to Colosse and this one to Philemon were written. He was a "fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus," either at this time or at some other time in the past. His greetings to the disciples in his home city were added along with those of several familiar companions in Paul's labors. Mark, Aristarchus, Demas [who would later desert him], and Luke were "fellow laborers" with the apostle and evidently were engaged in gospel work in Rome under Paul's personal direction.
4. As always, Paul concludes this unique epistle with a prayer in behalf of the disciples to whom he wrote. God's *grace* is the most precious gift that any Christian can receive as he struggles with the issues that confront him along his way to heaven. May we ask *grace* for ourselves in the same way that Paul asked it for the saints he loved!

1. To what individual(s) and group(s) did Paul address this letter?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
2. Paul commended Philemon's _____ and _____ toward the _____ and all the _____.
3. Knowledge of the _____ about (in) Philemon would might make _____ his _____ more _____.
4. Paul had _____ and _____ because the _____ of the _____ had been _____ by Philemon.
5. The tone of Paul's letter was one of _____ rather than of _____.
6. Paul was both an _____ man and a _____ when he wrote this letter.
7. Onesimus, whose name means "_____, " had before his conversion been _____ but was now _____ to Philemon and _____.
8. Had Paul kept Onesimus, he could have _____ to Paul in his _____ for the _____.
9. What might have caused Onesimus' departure and return home to Philemon?
10. Philemon should now treat Onesimus not just as a _____ but as a _____ both in the _____ and in the _____.
11. How did Paul propose to make sure that no advantage was taken of Philemon?
12. How did Paul expect Philemon to respond to his request about Onesimus?
13. What indicates that Paul expected to be released soon from his imprisonment?
14. Who were the men who sent their greetings? How did one of them disappoint Paul?
 - a. _____, _____, _____, _____, _____.
 - b. _____