

# *Off the Shelf*

## *Sunday School Lesson*

### *Titus 1*

#### **Introduction**

Paul wrote this letter to Titus who was one of his most trusted helpers. Paul sent him to Corinth as his representative. He was in charge of the collection of money for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. He was a leader among the Christians in Crete and Paul sent him as far away as Yugoslavia (Dalmatia). This letter was written around 65AD. The purpose was to instruct Christians in the doctrines of grace and good works.

#### **Greeting (1:1-4)**

*Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, promised before the beginning of time, and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior, To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.*

1. Paul begins by identifying himself as a servant and apostle of Jesus. His personal goal was to serve the needs of the church and to see it grow. However, he reminds believers that he also has authority by divine appointment as an apostle. (Prov 15:33, 22:4; 1 Cor 1:1; 9:16-17)
2. Holiness comes from salvation through faith in Jesus. Faith is given by God to those he chooses. Without this gift of faith, nobody would be saved because humans are rebellious and spiritually dead because of sins.
3. Born-again Christians have been called by God through the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Those who are genuine Christians have been chosen for salvation. This is entirely by the will of God and not through human effort. (Eph 2:8-9).
4. Genuine Christians also are made holy through faith in Jesus. They are also kept eternally secure because God's call and his work of salvation can't be changed. (Jn 10:27-29; 1 Cor 1:2; Col 3:12; 1 Pet 2:9)
5. Mercy, peace and love are foundations in the experience of born-again Christians. Paul reminds them of the blessings they have experienced. This is another way to

identify and affirm those who are genuine Christians.

- A. God grants mercy to Christians who accept the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for their sins. The blood of Jesus satisfies the wrath of God for those who are covered by it. Thus, God pardons sins and grants mercy instead of punishment. (Jn 3:16-18; Rom 8:1-4)
- B. Peace with God comes from being adopted into his family. This peace enables us to call God our Father and we are eternally secure in this relationship. (Jn 1:12-13; Rom 8:15-16)
- C. We are loved by God. This love is a consuming fire that motivates us to love God and teaches us how to love others. (Gal 5:6; 1 Th 1:3)

## **Qualifications of Elders (1:5-9)**

*The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.*

1. Church elders are leaders and overseers. They provide spiritual guidance and discipleship to promote growth in faith and good works. They are members of local congregations. (1 Tim 3:1-10) *Who are the elders in your church?*
2. Elders serve as examples and so they must have a good reputation that is free from accusations of doing something wrong. Likewise, their families must be examples of dedication to Jesus and obedience to his commands.
3. Elders must have self-control. They must have patience and not be subject to anger or quick-tempered actions. They must not abuse their authority by commanding rather than serving as leaders.
4. Elders must be motivated by love and concern for others and not for their personal gain in reputation or influence.
5. Elders must teach sound doctrines based on the Bible and be able to challenge false teachers.

## **False Teachers (1:10-16)**

*For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things that they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. Even one of their own prophets has said, “Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.” This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth. To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.*

1. Beware of false teachers who speak well. They like to command respect and attention by talking. These people try to distinguish themselves by introducing new or strange ideas that conflict with the Bible. They gather converts and profit from them. Like the Jewish Christians of Paul’s day, false teachers many times teach that works are necessary for salvation. (Rom 10: 9-11; Gal 3:1-5) *Who are some examples of false teachers who claim to be Christians and what errors do they teach?*
2. Paul warns that false teachers seek converts by going to their homes where they spread their lies among families. (2 Tim 3:1-7)
3. Paul says that the Christians must rebuke and separate from false teachers. They rise above their “go along to get along” culture and hold to what the Bible says. *In what ways does our culture today challenge us to “go along to get along?”*
4. Christians are to seek to live according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit through following the teachings of the Bible and prayer. There were false Jewish teachers who said customs, such as circumcision, were necessary for salvation. Likewise, they said that purification rituals and legal requirements of the Jews were still part of the gospel. *What is the role of sacraments? How do some Christian denominations teach salvation by works like the false teachers of Paul’s time?*

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### ***Sunday School Lesson***

### ***Titus 2***

## **Duties of Elders (2:1-15)**

*You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent I (in) the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us. Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.*

1. Elders are to teach only what is in the Bible. They are to avoid teaching speculations and personal opinions as doctrine. *Why is this important?*
2. Older men and women are to live as examples showing the fruit of the Holy Spirit. (Gal 5:22) Paul says that integrity and having a good reputation are important. *What is integrity? How does having a good reputation honor Jesus and advance the gospel?*
3. The Bible does not approve of slavery, just as it does not approve of men having more than one wife. (Mt 19:8-9) Paul’s focus in addressing slaves is to teach that everyone who is a Christian, regardless of their social status, must live in a manner that honors Jesus. In this way, people will be attracted to Christianity.
4. Christians are to be eager to do good. This means having a strong desire to please God. It also means that Christians are to be focused on loving others before themselves. (Mt 16:24-25)
5. Paul concludes by telling Titus that he should not be timid in speaking with authority based on the Bible. Titus should not be hindered because he is a young adult or because he is a Gentile. He also should not be hindered because of his speaking ability

or appearance. Do you think Christians tend to follow leaders who are good speakers and are attractive in appearance?

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### ***Titus 3***

#### **Instructions for Godly Living (3:1-11)**

***Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men. At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.***

1. Christians are to obey the laws of their country, except where the laws conflict with God's commands. (Acts 5:29) Christians are to be respectful and help others by serving. *What are some ways that you can be considerate and serve the needs of others? How does this show humility? Are there some laws that conflict with God's commands?*
2. Paul says that people that are not Christians are driven by their passions and pleasures. This results in foolish and wasteful living without purpose or hope. Humans are selfish and envious by nature. This causes strife, anger and hatred. This is called the depravity of man. *What are some problems that are caused by the depravity of mankind?*
3. God extends mercy to some people through faith in Jesus Christ. This happens by the work and will of God. Mankind receives and believes. God takes the initiative to

graciously call each Christian and adopt them into his family. (Jn 1:12-13; Rom 3:20-24; Eph 2:8-9) *How did God call you and save you?* Each Christian is to confess Jesus to others and tell how they were saved. (Rom 10: 9-10) Salvation is a gift from God and God is to receive the glory.

4. Good works are a response to the inner working of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit transforms our thoughts, so we become and act like Jesus. Good works are the evidence that we have been saved and do not count towards salvation. *What are some ways that your thinking and behavior have changed since you became a Christian?*
5. Paul says that believers should not quarrel over minor differences when these things are based on opinion and not the Bible. Some examples include: dancing, pouring or immersion in baptism, what Christians should or should not do on Sunday, the frequency of Communion, the use of wine or grape juice in Communion and so forth.
6. Christians who insist on quarreling about minor differences are divisive and must be warned to stop. If they persist, they are to be excluded from fellowship. Unity, peace and love can't flourish when quarrelsome people are present. This dishonors the gospel and hinders the witness of Christians which can keep others from accepting Jesus as their Savior. Ghandi said that he liked Jesus but not Christians whom he found to be unlike Jesus. *What are some of the Christ-like behaviors that you need to continue to work on?*

## **Conclusion (3:12-15)**

***As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there. Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need. Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives. Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.***

1. Paul trained up men to teach and disciple Christians, in the churches that he established on his missionary journeys. This shows the importance of mentoring other Christians so that they can discover their gifts and continue to spread the gospel. *Who has mentored you in your Christian growth? Who have you mentored?*
2. Christians are to care for each other. They are not to be focused only on themselves. The accumulation of food and other necessities through diligent work must include taking care of others. In this way, Christians express love and share God's blessings with others in need. Paul encourages people to work diligently, so that they have the

means to show grace and mercy to others. (Eph 4:28)

We come to appreciate the mercy and grace bestowed upon us by God when we take care of others in need. *Why is this true?* (Mt 5:7)