*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

May 9 - 14

*Letters of Paul*

**Monday, May 9 Titus 1:1-4**

*“To Titus, my true son in our common faith”*

 Like Timothy and the church in Ephesus, Titus has been sent by Paul to the island of Crete to minister to the believers. Paul begins his letter by identifying himself both as a slave (*doulos,* which can also be interpreted “servant”) of God and as an apostle. A slave was owned by another person to whom obedience was required. If slavery meant obligation, apostleship meant authority, but both meant responsibility.

 The faith that Paul wants strengthened in the church at Crete is not some vague subjective feeling but the concrete faith of those whom God has chosen to be his own, a faith that is grounded in the truth of Christ which teaches them that they are saved and shows them how to live as children of God. This true faith is being undermined by false teaching, so as with Timothy in Ephesus, Titus must work to combat error with a combination of sound doctrine and godly living. God is our Savior and he gives his grace and peace for the task of announcing his saving message.

*You have revealed your truth to me, Lord, and by it I am saved. Amen.*

**Tuesday, May 10 Titus 1:5-7**

*“The need for responsible leadership”*

 We know that Paul had spent time on Crete, so “I left you” in verse 5 does not mean that Paul simply dropped Titus off on the island of Crete. Rather, it implies that Paul himself was there and then left Titus behind. There seems to have been some disorganization after Paul left, which could be remedied by what had not been done before: appointing responsible leadership. The island, approximately 156 miles long and ranging from 8 to 35 miles wide, had a number of towns scattered throughout it. In each of these towns Titus is to appoint elders.

 The letter would have been read aloud to the church. Titus would have been aware of Paul’s requirements for elders, so the list of qualifications that follows is probably more for the Cretans to learn than to instruct Titus. They include blamelessness (that is, an untarnished reputation in the community), faithfulness to marriage vows, and children who follow their parents in the faith and are not living rebelliously. Arrogance, quick-temperedness, heavy drinking, violent behavior, and financial dishonesty are all significant red flags for leadership.

*May our leaders, Lord, manage your church well. Amen.*

**Wednesday, May 11 Titus 1:8-9**

*“Desirable characteristics of a leader”*

 Church leaders are to be “successful” people not so much in business but in self-discipline and character. To be sure, such people often *are* successful in business, but moral qualities are more important than that. Among the personal qualities mentioned in verses 6 through 9 only one – “manager of God’s household” – has directly to do with church ministry. The rest address the importance of a church leader having the respect of others for their conduct, among the believers in the church as well as with members of the larger community.

 Hospitality, loving what is good, living wisely and exercising justice, practicing devotion to God and discipline in behavior toward others, and having a strong belief in biblical teaching are listed here. It is important to note that these characteristics are not intended to be unique to church leaders, for in one form or another they describe the ideal character of all Christian men and women. Their function here is to portray a morally well-rounded person, who will not disgrace the Lord and his church.

*We pray for our leaders, Lord, that their lives may reflect their calling. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

May 9 - 14

*Letters of Paul*

**Thursday, May 12 Titus 1:10-14**

*“Those who insist on circumcision for salvation”*

 These verses introduce the people whose teachings must be opposed. There are enough of them to be called “many” and to constitute a major problem. The first descriptive word is “rebellious,” which can also be translated “disobedient.” Paul has the “circumcision group” particularly in mind. There is an urgency about this. Whereas some of the false teachers in Ephesus targeted certain women (2 Timothy 3:6), the false teachers at Crete are turning *whole families* upside down.

 Perhaps the “things they ought not to teach” include the kind of legalistic practices that, when followed by some members of a family, disrupt relationships. Further, these teachers are not operating out of sincerity but for the sake of dishonest gain. The purpose of the quotation in verse 12 is to provide a reason for distrusting the false teachers and to point out that a society that promotes laziness and the satisfying of base desires easily fosters the desire for dishonest gain in their false teachers.

*Give us wisdom, Lord, to discern what is true and what is false. Amen.*

**Friday, May 13 Titus 1:15-16**

*“They claim to know God”*

 Paul responds to the legalism of the circumcision group by placing responsibility for their many rules directly on their apparent super-religiosity by which they carefully track back their religious myths and rigorously seek purity by following their reconstruction of the ancient food laws. But in fact, if they were truly pure, they would not be so obsessed with the need for such laws. Through their impure minds and consciences everything appears impure and so needs legalistic regulation.

 The criticism of the false teachers reaches a climax in verse 16. Those who claim they know God not only fail to match their actions to their words but by those actions actually deny God. This is linked to the fact just stated at the end of verse 15 that both their minds and consciences are corrupted. Their assault on the freedom of believers in Christ is labeled “detestable” by Paul, a word used by Jesus in the Gospels where, when speaking of hypocrites, he says: “What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight” (Luke 16:15).

*May the way I live, Lord, show that I know and follow you. Amen.*

**Saturday, May 14 Titus 2:1-10**

*“Sound doctrine and moral character”*

 Verses 2-10 unpack the command of verse 1, which expresses a major theme: A Christian’s moral character should be consistent with the teachings of Scripture. God should be glorified not only verbally but also in the good works of those who profess Christ. While the importance of moral character and good works have been repeatedly applied to Timothy, Titus, and church leaders, they are expected of every believer. The good works urged here are both important in themselves and as a foundation for the missionary message of the gospel.

 It is noteworthy that many of the characteristics of ordinary Christian men and women in verses 1-5 are similar to those expected of church leaders. This fortifies the teachings of Paul on the importance of integrity of character for those who lead in the church. They are not people nominated by friends and voted on to serve a term or two as a mere tour of duty. Far beyond that, they are people already honored in the church and known to embody with a high degree of consistency the qualities expected of all believers.

*I pray, Lord, that your good news is affirmed by the character of my life. Amen.*