

Paul wrote four personal epistles, two to Timothy who was at Ephesus, one to Philemon which was sent along with the epistle to the assembly at Colosse, and one to Titus. Paul had left Titus on the large Mediterranean island of Crete. Paul had left him with a difficult assignment, to bring order out of chaos in the Christian assemblies on an island noted for its coarse and rowdy culture. Although addressed to Titus personally it seems to have been written to be read to the believers on Crete as well. Understandably the epistle reiterates the fundamentals of the Christian faith. It calls for Titus to mark out elders in every city and to instruct the local saints everywhere as to conduct becoming to the doctrines they professed to hold, doctrines basic to the Christian faith. This epistle therefore has universal application to the days following the death of the apostles, reaching down through almost two thousand years to us today. In many ways it parallels 1 Timothy, also apparently written to be read to local believers, but is more brief and compact although written about the same time from a Roman prison. The second letter to Timothy was written two or three years later.

Who is Titus? He is not named in the Acts. All we know of him is from references in three other epistles, eight in 2 Corinthians, two in Galatians and one in Timothy. These references show he was more than merely a dependable messenger but a servant of the Lord in his own right, so to speak. While he is contented to serve Paul upon some important missions he also was committed directly to personal service for the Lord service. His activities on behalf of assemblies in Macedonia and the Corinthian saints are recorded in 2 Corinthians. Paul tells Timothy Titus was gone to Dalmatia on the east side of the Adriatic Sea across from Italy. (Present day south western coastal Croatia, formerly northeastern Yugoslavia.)

Although 2 Timothy was the last epistle of Paul, Titus more aptly fits a place as the last in a spiritual order of Paul's epistles. About a century ago F. W. Grant wrote commentaries under the title "The Numerical Bible" (which see) also containing his good translation. His commentary is based upon an observed numerical structure of the scriptures. He has found that common everyday numbers like one, two, five, twelve, etc. can have spiritual significance and that the word of God is organized and arranged in an order fitting to numerical significance. He divides the Bible into five major divisions: 1) The Mosaic Pentateuch, 2) the twelve History books, 3) the five Poetical books, 4) the sixteen Prophetic books and 5) the New Testament. Each of these in turn can be similarly subdivided. The twenty seven books of the New

Testament divide into five major sections: 1) the four Gospels, 2) the Acts, 3) Paul's 14 epistles (including Hebrews), 4) the 7 General epistles and 5) the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Paul's epistles in turn are divided into two groups of five each, a mini-pentateuch. I) Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians (& Philemon) and Philippians. II) 1&2 Thessalonians, 1&2 Corinthians, Hebrews, 1&2 Timothy and Titus. These groups of five have some correspondence to the distinctive character and content of the five different parts of the Bible as reflected in the five books of Moses. The Pentateuch is patterned after the structure of the whole Word of God. So we have repeated patterns within patterns, yet each with distinguishing glories as they together present Christ in His many faceted glory.

In the Pentateuch Deuteronomy is the fifth book, a reprise and summing up of the first four but from God's perspective. The fifth in other series are similar, (Chronicles, Proverbs, the Twelve Minor Prophets and the New Testament.) Within the New Testament the Revelation is the fifth. Within Paul's epistles there are two series, Philippians the fifth of the first series and Titus the fifth, the "Deuteronomy" of the second series. (You knew all this was leading up to something. about Titus.) :-)

Titus well deserves its place in the series as the "Deuteronomy" of Paul's epistles. Its main theme is that our personal lives and our assembly "**adorn** the doctrine of God our Savior, in all things," Titus 2:10. Paul outlines essential doctrines and the conduct consistent with the teaching. Not just holding but living out what the Holy Spirit teaches us through the scriptures and actually adorning what is taught. Not adorning ourselves with the scriptures but we ourselves adorning the doctrine, and not just the doctrine, but Christ Himself of whom the scriptures speak.

*John 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me*

Paul greets Titus both as a fellow servant of God and rather more formally, as an apostle. Paul's apostleship is not simply a high ranking position in the Church. It was commissioned according to the faith of God's elect. He is not one who climbed a pinnacle of spiritual greatness. He had once earnestly and zealously sought power and prestige and standing with the God of Israel as Pharisee of the Pharisees etc, Phil 3. No way did he, the persecutor of Christ, dream of becoming His apostle. He is the prime example of God's elect, though brought to Christ by sight not by faith. But He was forever after the apostle of the faith of God's elect. The truth which is according to godliness, the faith which we now believe, hold and teach was largely revealed directly to him by the ascended Christ. Per His command Paul taught it the rest of his life.

This faith involved not only a present testimony but it was in hope of a better future day. Eternal Life that is sure, that was promised by God even before the world began, is not wishful thinking, whimsey, nor dependent upon our conduct. God, who cannot lie, has spoken and promised. Dare we doubt Him?. Dare we lose sight of it? Our conduct today is in view of God's promise, the sure hope of that which lies before us and is one of the wonders of God's love that engages and motivates us now. Well can Paul bestow blessing on Titus whom he speaks of as his son in the faith Are you being mentored? Titus and Timothy were. Are

you older ones in the faith mentoring the younger in the faith? Paul was. So Paul blesses in his greeting, blesses in the full name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the intimate name of God the Father. Are we in good standing with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ that we can with good conscience bless and pray for others in the Lord's Name? Can others freely call down blessing upon me without reservation as to my spiritual state, or will their prayers be concerned more with my spiritual state?

By Ron Canner, August 30, 2006