LIFE-STUDY OF TITUS

MESSAGE ONE

ESTABLISHING THE AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH

Scripture Reading: Titus 1:1-9

It is helpful to know the sequence in which the four books of 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon were written. Philemon was written first, during Paul's first Roman imprisonment. After his release from prison, Paul wrote 1 Timothy and the Epistle to Titus. Finally, during his second imprisonment, at the time of Nero's persecution, he wrote his last epistle, the Epistle of 2 Timothy.

I. THE SUBJECT OF THE BOOK: THE MAINTENANCE OF THE ORDER OF THE CHURCH

The subject of the book of Titus is the maintenance of the order of the church. During Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, the churches were subject to testing. During this time of testing, certain churches proved not to be so orderly. Thus, after his release from prison, Paul visited various places, including the city of Ephesus and the island of Crete. Realizing the situation of the churches, Paul became burdened to write an epistle to Titus telling him how to maintain the proper order of a local assembly. This was the background and also the reason for the writing of this book. If the order of the church is to be maintained, the authority in the church needs to be established. Therefore, in this message we shall consider from 1:1-9 the establishing of the authority in the church. As we shall see, this has much to do with appointing elders in each city (v. 5).

II. INTRODUCTION

A. Paul, a Slave of God and an Apostle of Jesus Christ

Let us first consider 1:1-9 verse by verse and then consider in more detail certain crucial points.

Titus 1:1 says, "Paul, a slave of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's chosen ones, and the full knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness." Paul was an apostle according to four things: the command of God (1 Tim. 1:1), the faith of God's chosen ones, the promise of life (2 Tim. 1:1), and the full knowledge of the truth. Command is on God's side, speaking for Him and requiring something of us for Him. Faith is on our side, responding to God's requirements and receiving His grace. It is a proclamation that we are unable to fulfill God's requirements, but that God has done everything for us and that we receive what He has done. The life promised by God is what we have received of Him for the carrying out of His demand. It was in this way that Paul was an apostle to administrate God's New Testament economy.

In 1:1 Paul refers to God's chosen ones. This denotes the believers in Christ, who were chosen by God the Father before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4) and selected from mankind for salvation.

Paul was an apostle not only according to the faith of God's chosen ones, but also according to the full knowledge of the truth. Faith is to receive all God has planned for us, all God has done for us, and all God has given to us. Full knowledge of the truth is a thorough apprehension of the truth, a full acknowledgement and appreciation of the reality of all the spiritual and divine things which we have received through faith. Apostleship is according to such an apprehension and appreciation of the reality of God's eternal economy.

In 1:1 Paul indicates that the truth is according to godliness. The truth, the reality, of God's eternal economy

is according to godliness, which is God manifested in man. Apostleship is the dispensing of this reality to God's believing elect and the carrying out of such a godliness among them through preaching, teaching, and administration in the Word and in the Spirit (1 Tim. 6:3).

In verse 2 Paul goes on to say, "In the hope of eternal life, which God, Who cannot lie, promised before times eternal." Paul was an apostle not only according to the faith and the knowledge of the truth, but also in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised in eternity. This corresponds to "according to the promise of life" in 2 Timothy 1:1. In the hope of eternal life means on the basis of, on the condition of, relying upon the hope of, eternal life. Eternal life, the uncreated life of God, is not only for us to partake of and enjoy today, but also for us to inherit (Matt. 19:29) in its full extent for eternity. Today's experience of eternal life qualifies us to inherit it in the future. Its enjoyment today is a foretaste; the full taste will be the inheritance of it in the coming age and in eternity, which is the hope of eternal life. This is the blessed hope revealed in 2:13, which is comprised of the freedom of the glory of full sonship, the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:21-25), the salvation to be revealed in the last time (1 Pet. 1:5), and the living hope of the incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance reserved in heaven (1 Pet. 1:3-4). This is the full, spiritual, divine, and heavenly blessing and enjoyment of eternal life, both in the millennium and in the new heaven and new earth (2 Pet. 1:11; 3:13; Rev. 21:6-7), referred to in 1 Timothy 4:8. Paul assumed his apostleship and accomplished his apostolic ministry, not based upon the benefit of the present life, nor on the condition of the privilege of the law, but based upon the condition of this hope, indicating that for his apostleship he relied upon and trusted in the divine life with all its hope, which God promised in eternity and which was brought to us through the gospel (2 Tim. 1:10).

The Epistle to Titus is occupied with the maintenance of order in the churches. For this, the faith of God's chosen

ones, the truth according to godliness, and eternal life are indispensable. Hence, in the very opening word these three things are set forth.

Eternal life is the divine life, the uncreated life of God. It is not only everlasting, lasting forever, with respect to time, but in its nature it is also eternal and divine. The eternal life of God is given to all believers in Christ (1 Tim. 1:16) and is the main element of the divine grace given to us (Rom. 5:17, 21). This life has conquered death (Acts 2:24) and will swallow up death (2 Cor. 5:4). It was according to the promise of such a life that Paul was an apostle (2 Tim. 1:1). This life and its consequent incorruption have been brought to light and made visible to men through the preaching of the gospel.

Eternal life was "promised before times eternal." This must be the promise of the Father to the Son in eternity. The Father chose us in the Son and predestinated us unto sonship through Him (Eph. 1:5) before the foundation of the world. It must have been in that eternal epoch that the Father promised the Son that He would give His eternal life to His believers. By receiving this life the believers, who were given to Him in eternity (John 17:2), would become His brothers (Heb. 2:11).

In verse 3 Paul continues, "But in its own times has manifested His word in the proclamation with which I was entrusted, according to the command of our Savior God." The phrase "its own times" refers to the times (not times eternal) of the eternal life mentioned in verse 2. It denotes the proper time for the eternal life to be manifested.

The phrase "His word" in verse 3 is equal to eternal life in verse 2. This corresponds to 1 John 1:1 and 2.

B. To Titus, a Genuine Child according to the Common Faith

In verse 4 Paul says, "To Titus, genuine child according to the common faith: grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior." Titus, like Timothy (1 Tim. 1:2), was Paul's genuine child not by natural birth, but in

faith. He was Paul's child spiritually in the sphere and element of faith. The common faith in this verse is the general faith, which is common to all believers, the like precious faith (2 Pet. 1:1).

III. TO ESTABLISH THE AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH

A. The Apostle's Charge

Titus 1:5 says, "For this cause I left you in Crete, that you might set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in each city, as I charged you." The words "each city," compared with "in every church" in Acts 14:23, indicate not only that the jurisdiction of a local church is that of the city in which it is located, but also that in one city there should be only one church. The eldership of a local church should cover the entire city where that church is. Such a unique eldership in a city preserves the unique oneness of the Body of Christ from damage. One city should have only one church with one eldership. This practice is illustrated, beyond any question and doubt, by the clear pattern in the New Testament (Acts 8:1; 13:1; Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; Rev. 1:11), and is an absolute prerequisite for the maintenance of proper order in a local church. Because of this, the first thing the apostle charged Titus to do in setting things in order was to appoint elders in each city.

B. The Qualifications of the Elders

In verses 6 through 9 Paul lists many of the qualifications of the elders: unreprovable, the husband of one wife, having believing children, not accused of dissipation, not unruly, being the overseer as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not an excessive drinker, not a striker, not seeking gain by base means, hospitable, a lover of good, one with a sober mind, righteous, holy, and self-controlled. We have considered many of these qualifications in detail in the message entitled "Overseers and Deacons for the Church's Administration," Message 5 in the Life-study of 1 Timothy.

In verse 9 Paul says, "Holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort by the healthy teaching and to convict those who contradict." The elders are appointed to administrate God's government in a local church that good order may be maintained in the church. To accomplish this, the elders need to hold to the faithful word, which is according to the apostles' teaching, that they may be able to stop troublesome talkers and calm a tumultuous situation (vv. 9-14).

The "faithful word" is the trustworthy, reliable, and true word which was taught in the churches according to the apostles' teaching. The elders in a local church should hold to this kind of healthy word that they may fulfill their duty in teaching (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17).

The teaching referred to here is the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42), which eventually became the New Testament. This indicates that the churches were established according to the apostles' teaching and followed their teaching. It also indicates that the order of the churches was maintained by the faithful word, which was given according to the apostles' teaching. The disorder of the church was mainly due to deviation from the apostles' teaching. To counter this, we must hold to the faithful word taught in the churches according to the apostles' teaching. In a darkened and confused situation, we must cleave to the enlightening and ordering word in the New Testament--the apostles' teaching. To maintain the order of the church, the word according to God's revelation is needed in addition to the eldership.

We have seen that "healthy teaching" implies life. Anything that is healthy refers to the health of life. The teaching of the apostles ministers healthy teaching as the supply of life to people, either nourishing them or healing them.

By holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, elders can "convict those who contradict." To convict here is to disclose the true character of anything so as to convict and hence reprove by exposing one's fault.

The Greek word is translated expose in Ephesians 5:11 and 13.

Let us now go back to verses 1 through 3 and consider certain important points in more detail.

In verse 1 Paul says that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ "according to the faith of God's chosen ones, and the full knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness." Here we see that Paul's apostleship was according to the faith of God's chosen ones and according to the full knowledge of the truth, and that this truth is according to godliness. Three crucial words here are faith, truth, and godliness. Paul was an apostle not directly according to godliness, but according to the faith and to the full knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness. In verse 2 we see that Paul was an apostle also "in the hope of eternal life." The relative pronoun "which" in this verse refers to eternal life. Eternal life implies hope. With temporal life there is no true hope, but with eternal life there is hope. Because eternal life is forever and cannot be terminated, it gives us hope.

The hope of eternal life was "promised before times eternal" by God, who cannot lie. The expression "times eternal" is a special term denoting eternity. In eternity God promised eternal life with its hope. When we go on to verse 3, we see that God not only promised eternal life, but "in its own times has manifested His word in the proclamation" with which Paul was entrusted. In these verses we see that God has done two things: promised eternal life and manifested His word.

In 1 Timothy 1:1 Paul says that he became "an apostle of Christ Jesus, according to the command of God our Savior." However, in 2 Timothy 1:1 he says that he was an apostle "according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus." Paul was appointed an apostle by God's command with His requirement. A command requires something of us, but life supplies something to us. Apart from eternal life, Paul would not have had the supply to fulfill God's requirement. In order for Paul to carry out God's command

with its extremely high requirements, he needed another life. This life is actually the life of God, the One who issues the command. Furthermore, this life is the very commanding and requiring God Himself. First, God makes a requirement, and then He comes in to supply what is needed to fulfill His own requirement. He requires by command, and He supplies by being life. When Paul received God's command to carry out His New Testament economy, perhaps he said, "Lord, who am I to carry out such a command? I am not able to fulfill this requirement." To this the Lord may have said, "Foolish child, I'll come into you to supply you. If you submit to My requirement, I'll come into you to fulfill it. I will be in you the life which is able to carry out My own requirement."

At this juncture it is worthwhile to compare 1 Corinthians 15:10 with Galatians 2:20. In the former verse Paul says, "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." In the latter verse Paul says, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." The grace which was with Paul and which enabled him to labor more than others was actually God Himself. God in Paul was eternal life as his supply and support for the carrying out of His New Testament economy. Therefore, the God who commanded is also the God who supplies.

In Titus 1:1 Paul again speaks of his apostleship, but he adds something to what is written in 1 Timothy 1:1 and 2 Timothy 1:1. As we have pointed out, in 1:1 and 2 Paul mentions the faith of God's chosen ones, the truth which is according to godliness, and the hope of eternal life. Although it is wonderful to see that Paul was an apostle according to the command of God and according to the promise of eternal life, we need to ask, in a thoughtful manner, how this eternal life can come into us. It comes into us through faith, through the organic union between us and the Triune God. Therefore, in 1:1 Paul says that he

became an apostle not only according to the command of God and not only according to the life of God, but also according to the faith of God's chosen ones, the faith which brought him into an organic union with God. This was the way Paul obtained the life supply and support to fulfill God's command.

In 1:1 Paul is careful to point out that this faith is the faith of "God's chosen ones." We did not choose God; He chose us. Hence, the matter of our believing in Christ depends on God's choice, not on ours. God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. We should praise Him and worship Him for choosing us. Today we are in the Lord's recovery because God has chosen us. He was the One who took the initiative. How can you explain the fact that you believe in the Lord Jesus when others, perhaps members of your family, refuse to believe in Him? The only explanation is that God has chosen us. I can testify that I simply must believe in Christ. If I did not believe in Him, I would not have peace. If I did not believe in Christ, I would have no purpose for living. I would not be able to eat or sleep properly. No matter how others may treat me and no matter what my circumstances may be, I have no choice but to believe in the Lord.

In Acts 13 Paul and Barnabas turned to the Gentiles after the Jews rejected the gospel. Verse 46 says, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (lit.). Verse 48 says, "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." The reason these Gentiles could receive the word of the Lord and believe is that they were destined, even predestinated, to believe in Christ. Likewise, we who believe in Christ today are God's chosen ones.

In Titus 1:1 Paul does not speak of the faith of the believers, but of the faith of God's chosen ones. By so doing he indicates that the initiative for believing in Christ

comes from God, not from us. Because God has chosen us to believe in Christ, we have come to believe in Him. Paul was an apostle according to the faith of God's chosen ones. He had this faith, and we have it also. Through faith Paul was brought into the organic union with the Triune God, and in this way he could receive the supply of eternal life.

Paul could stand against the Roman Empire not because he was strong or capable in himself, but because he had received eternal life. He was an apostle according to this eternal life, the eternal life which he received through the faith which brought him into an organic union with the Triune God.

We have pointed out that Paul also says that he became an apostle according to the full knowledge of the truth. Again and again we have seen that the truth in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus denotes the reality of the contents of God's New Testament economy. We should have not only the faith of God's chosen ones, but also the full knowledge of the truth. We have the faith to bring us into the organic union, and we have the full knowledge of the truth of God's New Testament economy. This means that we know Christ as the embodiment of God and the church as the Body of Christ.

Actually Paul's apostleship involved four factors: God's command, eternal life, faith, and the full knowledge of the truth. Because of these four elements, Paul was one who troubled religion. He was even called a pestilent fellow, a troublemaker. Of these four elements, two are on God's side--the command and the eternal life--and two are on our side--faith and the full knowledge of the truth. When we first believed in the Lord Jesus, we had faith, but we did not have the full knowledge of the truth. Praise the Lord that in His recovery we have the full knowledge of the truth!

Titus 1:2 says that eternal life was "promised before times eternal." This indicates that the promise was not given directly to the chosen ones. Rather, the promise was made by the Father to the Son in eternity. John 17:2 seems

to refer to this: "Even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to all whom You have given Him." By receiving eternal life the believers, who were given to the Son in eternity, become His brothers. Hebrews 2:11 refers to the brothers of Christ: "For both He Who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers." Because the promise of eternal life was made by the Father to the Lord Jesus in eternity, the Bible says that God chose us in Christ. God did not choose us directly; He chose us in Christ. In like manner, the promise of eternal life concerning us was given to Christ. Thus, in the Son we now receive this promise.

According to verse 3, God not only promised eternal life before times eternal, but "in its own times has manifested His word in the proclamation." The eternal life was promised by the Father to the Son; however, what God the Father has manifested is not eternal life, but His word. By reading verses 2 and 3 carefully, we see that the word manifested is the equivalent of the eternal life promised. Paul does not say that God promised eternal life and then manifested this eternal life. He says that God promised eternal life and then manifested His word. Therefore, God's word is eternal life. If His word is not the eternal life directly, it is at least the means of conveying eternal life. In our experience we have eternal life through the word.

The expression "its own times" refers to the times related to eternal life mentioned in verse 2. God promised eternal life through the Son concerning us in eternity, but the proclamation was made in different ages and at different times. God manifested His eternal life in His word by preaching, that is, by proclamation. This proclamation was made in Asia Minor at one time and in Europe at a different time.

Paul here does not say that eternal life was manifested by the preaching of the gospel. Instead, he speaks of times, the word, and the proclamation. The eternal life promised was manifested at different times by proclamation, by

the preaching of the gospel. This manifestation first took place on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. Later the proclamation went to Antioch, Asia Minor, and Europe. Centuries later this proclamation reached China. Therefore, "its own times" denotes the various times God's word is manifested in the preaching of the gospel. Paul was entrusted with this proclamation according to the command of our Savior God.

LIFE-STUDY OF TITUS

MESSAGE TWO

DEALING WITH THE INFLUENCE OF JUDAISM AND GNOSTICISM

Scripture Reading: Titus 1:10-16

According to 1:10-16, at the time Titus was in Crete two isms were quite prevailing: Judaism and Gnosticism. In this message we shall consider from these verses how Titus was instructed to deal with the influence of Judaism and Gnosticism.

I. THE INFLUENCE OF JUDAISM

A. Unruly Men, Vain Talkers and Deceivers

In verses 10 and 11, Paul says, "For there are many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who overthrow whole households, teaching things which they ought not for the sake of base gain." Both Paul's word about "those of the circumcision" in verse 10 and his reference to "Jewish myths" in verse 14 point to the influence of Judaism. Those of the circumcision were Jewish believers who were seducers within the church. Paul says that such ones must be stopped. The way to stop them is by severe reproof (v. 13) with the faithful word according to the apostles' teaching (v. 9). These vain talkers and deceivers overthrow whole households, "teaching things which they ought not for the sake of base gain." What they did was similar to what was done by the reprobate prophet, Balaam (2 Pet. 2:15-16; Jude 11).

I would call your attention to the little word "for," at the beginning of verse 10, indicating that this verse is related to the foregoing verse. In verse 9 Paul says that an

overseer must hold to "the faithful word which is according to the teaching that he may be able both to exhort by the healthy teaching and to convict those who contradict." Then Paul goes on to explain that there are many unruly men, especially of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped. These verses indicate that Paul's charge to Titus concerning the establishment of the eldership is related to the disturbances caused by the influence of Judaism. There was the urgent need for the eldership to be set in order so that those who taught differently could be dealt with. Certain Jewish believers brought their Judaism into the church life and this, with its different teachings, caused a disturbance. Here we have a basic principle related to the eldership: every elder must be a watchman who is on the alert lest some teaching different from that of the apostles' ministry is brought into the church.

B. The True Testimony of a Cretan Prophet

In verses 12 and 13 Paul declares, "One of them, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. This testimony is true." One of them refers to one of the Cretans. All those mentioned in verses 9b and 10 were such Cretans. The prophet of their own was a heathen prophet, probably Epimenides, a native of Crete who lived about 600 B.C., according to legend.

C. The Apostle's Charge

In verse 13 Paul charges Titus to "reprove them severely, that they may be healthy in the faith." The Greek word rendered reprove here is the same word translated convict in verse 9. It means to disclose the true character of anything so as to convict and hence reprove by exposing one's fault. The Greek word rendered severely may also be rendered sharply. The purpose of such severe reproof was that those receiving it might be healthy in the faith. The gainsayers (v. 9) and vain talkers (v. 10) were infected with doctrinal diseases and became unhealthy in the faith. They

needed the inoculation of the healthy teaching and the healthy word (1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3), which the elders should provide for their healing.

As in 1 Timothy 1:19 and 3:9, the faith here is objective. It refers to the things in which we believe. This is to be distinguished from the subjective meaning of faith, which refers to the act of believing.

II. THE INFLUENCE OF GNOSTICISM

A. Jewish Myths-- the Seed of Gnostic Mythologies

Verse 14 says, "Not paying attention to Jewish myths." The Greek word for myths is rendered myths here and in 1 Timothy 1:4, tales in 1 Timothy 4:7, and fables in 2 Timothy 4:4. It refers to words, speeches, and conversations concerning such things as rumors, reports, stories, and fictions. It may include Jewish stories of miracles or rabbinical fabrications. These myths were the profane and old-womanish tales. The Jewish myths mentioned here may have been the seed of the Gnostic mythologies.

B. Commandments of Men Who Turn Away from the Truth

In verse 14 Paul also mentions "commandments of men who turn away from the truth." According to the following verse, these commandments of the heretics must have been precepts concerning abstinence from meats and other things ordained by God for man's use (see 1 Tim. 4:3; Col. 2:20-22). These were the commandments of the earlier Gnostics, not the ascetics, who adopted their theosophy from Jewish sources, probably some derivation from the Mosaic law.

The men Paul refers to in this verse are probably those of the circumcision (v. 10). These men turn away from the truth. The truth here and the faith in the preceding verse prove that those who were dealt with here were not unbelievers. There were some in the church who had

turned away from the truth concerning God's economy. Most of them might have been Jewish Christians who still held their Jewish myths and traditions and thereby became a great disturbance to the church. They had to be stopped by the word of the truth according to the faith so that the order of the church might be maintained under the established eldership.

In verse 15 Paul continues, "All things are pure to the pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience have been defiled." The statement, "All things are pure to the pure," must have been a Christian maxim. The apostle quoted it to refute the commandments of men (v. 14), that is, the precepts of abstinence, which forbade certain actions and the eating of certain foods (1 Tim. 4:3-5; Rom. 14:20).

Paul says that to those who are defiled, or polluted, and unbelieving nothing is pure, but both their mind and conscience are defiled. The mind is the leading part of the soul, and the conscience is the main part of our spirit. If our mind is polluted, our soul is spontaneously polluted; and if our conscience is defiled, our spirit is unavoidably defiled. This is all due to unbelief. Our faith purifies us (Acts 15:9).

In verse 16 Paul goes on to say, "They profess to know God, but by their works they deny Him, being abominable and disobedient, and as to every good work disapproved." The Greek word rendered disapproved can also be translated reprobate, worthless, disqualified. It means unable to stand the test.

C. The Apostle's Charge

Paul's charge to Titus is simply not to pay attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men (v. 14).

Just as the elders in the churches in Crete were to watch out for the influence of Judaism and Gnosticism and not permit different teachings to creep into the church life, we also need to watch out for isms today, such as Catholicism and denominationalism. We should also be watchful concerning the hypocrisy and the superficial and

superstitious tales circulated among many Christians. If these things are brought into the Lord's recovery, they will cause trouble. The pure church life is built only upon the healthy teaching of the apostles. This is the reason Paul says that elders must hold to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, so that they may be able to exhort by healthy teaching. The teaching in verse 9 refers to that of the apostles (Acts 2:42), which eventually became the New Testament. The apostles' teaching was the healthy teaching. The churches were established according to the apostles' teaching and followed their teaching. Furthermore, the order of the church was maintained by the faithful word given according to this teaching. At the beginning of the church life, when the believers spoke about the teaching, everyone realized that this meant the teaching of the apostles. In Jerusalem those who received the Lord Jesus and were added to the church continued in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles.

In 1:9 Paul does not say "sound teaching" or even "pure teaching"; he speaks of "healthy teaching." Certain teachings may be sound or pure without being healthy. Healthy teaching is always related to life and is able either to nourish us or to heal us. Only something living can be healthy. For example, we do not speak of a table or chair as being healthy. The teachings of the apostles were not only sound and pure, but were healthy, full of life.

The crucial point of the healthy teaching of the apostolic ministry concerns the Triune God processed to dispense Himself as the all-inclusive Spirit into His chosen ones so that they may be brought into an organic union to receive the divine transfusion and thereby become sons of God and members of Christ. As a result, they can be the Body to express Christ, the One in whom the fullness of God dwells. Almost all of this is neglected by Christians today. Even those teachings which are truly sound are for the most part superficial.

Some believers are told nothing more than that if they receive the Lord, they will be saved by grace. They do not

even receive an adequate explanation concerning what it is this grace saves them from. According to Ephesians 2:8, a verse often quoted in pointing out that salvation is by grace, to be saved does not mean to be saved from hell. According to the context, to be saved is to be saved from death, or from a deadening situation, that we may be raised up and seated in the heavens in a living way. Furthermore, contrary to the common, superficial understanding, grace in Ephesians 2:8 is not simply unmerited favor. It is the Triune God as everything to us for our enjoyment. Christians who emphasize the preaching of the gospel often quote Ephesians 2:8. However, because they understand this verse very superficially, rarely does anyone touch the reality of it.

In the foregoing message we pointed out that Paul was an apostle according to the command of God, the promise of eternal life, the faith of God's chosen ones, and the full knowledge of the truth. Can the majority of Christian teachers honestly say that they have the full knowledge of the truth? Certainly not. They may be familiar with particular doctrines and consider this doctrinal knowledge the full knowledge of the truth. Some may know all about the seven dispensations and yet not possess the full knowledge of the truth. The Lord Jesus once declared, "I am the truth" (John 14:6). If, as is the practice of many Christians, we interpret truth to mean doctrine, then the Lord Jesus would have been saying, "I am the doctrine." How ridiculous! Many Christians, even Bible teachers, do not know the meaning of truth in the New Testament. Eventually, superficiality can lead to hypocrisy, and hypocrisy, to superstition.

There is a doctrine commonly held among Christians that as long as a person believes in the Lord Jesus, he is saved and he will have no problems at the time of the Lord's coming. According to this view, when the believers are raptured, they will not have any problems with the Lord, and all will reign with Him in the kingdom. There is even a bumper sticker which makes light of the rapture by saying: "Warning--in case of rapture, this car will be unmanned." Many Christians mistakenly believe that

simply because they are saved they have a "ticket" which will admit them into the kingdom of the heavens. But as D. M. Panton has pointed out, many will be surprised to realize that this ticket is false and will not admit them into the heavenly kingdom. A great many of today's Christians may have the shocking realization that the ticket which some minister told them would guarantee an entrance into the kingdom will not be accepted at the time of the Lord's coming. Because such superficial and even superstitious teachings are prevalent today, we need to fight against them, just as Paul fought against the hypocrisies of Judaism and Gnosticism.

Another teaching we must oppose is the saying that as long as two or three meet in the name of the Lord, they are the church. According to this erroneous teaching, there can be many different churches in a locality. What falsehood! Two or three believers may meet in the name of the Lord, but that does not necessarily mean that they are the church in that locality.

Although we need to fight against superficial and superstitious teachings, this definitely does not mean that we deliberately cause trouble to our family, relatives, friends, or neighbors. Yes, we must fight for the truth of God. We must be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. However, it is absolutely necessary that we maintain the best relationship with others. The young people must honor their parents, and we all need to have a proper relationship with our family, relatives, and neighbors. We in the Lord's recovery should be the best neighbors and the most peaceable of people. It is an evil rumor and slander to say that we are not human. We aspire to be the most human of people, those who are Jesusly human, divinely human. In all our contact with others, we need to display the highest humanity and the best conduct and behavior. We are not fighting against persons--we are fighting against isms.

Our burden is not simply to oppose superficiality, hypocrisy, and superstition. It is to minister Christ and the church for the fulfillment of God's economy. God our

Father certainly has an eternal purpose to fulfill. But Satan has come in with many distractions and falsehoods. Our burden must be to minister the all-inclusive Christ and the church as the Body of Christ to those who love God and seek Christ. We need to help all those who pursue the Lord to come to the full knowledge of the truth. We need to sound the trumpet that those who seek the Lord Jesus may come together as a living Body of Christ to fulfill God's purpose and to hasten the coming of the Lord. Concerning this, we all must be desperate and give ourselves to prayer. On the one hand, we like to maintain a peaceful situation with others. On the other hand, for the sake of God's purpose, we must stand firm for the full knowledge of God's truth and fight the good fight against the evil powers of darkness.

LIFE-STUDY OF TITUS

MESSAGE THREE

BRINGING THE SAINTS OF DIFFERENT AGES INTO AN ORDERLY LIFE

Scripture Reading: Titus 2:1-8

In 2:1-8 the word healthy is used three times. In verse 1 Paul says, "But as for you, speak the things which are fitting to healthy teaching." In verse 2 Paul speaks of being healthy in faith, love, and endurance. In verse 8 Paul refers to "healthy speech that cannot be condemned." Titus was to speak the things which are fitting to healthy teaching and show himself a pattern of healthy words, and the elderly men were to be healthy in faith, love, and endurance. It is significant that in these verses, a portion of Titus in which the saints are charged to live an orderly life in the church, Paul uses the word healthy three times. If we study the verses where this word is used, and especially if we pray-read them, we shall be richly nourished. I would encourage you to pray over Paul's word concerning healthy teaching, being healthy in faith, love, and endurance, and healthy speech. If you do this, you will enjoy an excellent spiritual meal.

I. TO SPEAK THE THINGS WHICH ARE FITTING TO HEALTHY TEACHING

Titus 2:1 says, "But as for you, speak the things which are fitting to healthy teaching." This verse opens with the word "but" to show that it is in contrast to 1:16. In contrast to those who profess to know God, but by their works deny Him, Titus was to speak the things which are fitting to healthy teaching.

The healthy teaching is always according to the truth (1:14) of the faith (1:13). It is the content of the apostles'

teaching, the content of God's New Testament economy. It not only ministers the life supply to the believers and heals the spiritual diseases, but in so doing also brings the church into a sound condition with a good order. Hence, it is very much stressed in these three books, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, books dealing with the disorder and decline of the church. In 2:1 Paul charged Titus not to deviate from the healthy teaching, from the apostles' teaching. He should not be like the gainsayers, the vain talkers, those who teach differently and make the church subject to the influence of Judaism and Gnosticism.

We also should be reminded to speak the things which are fitting to healthy teaching. The word healthy points to that which is hygienic and which can both inoculate others against spiritual poison and also supply them with life. Our teachings should not merely pass on knowledge to others, but should supply them with life. Often when I have been tempted to speak about a certain subject, I was stopped. I had the sense that there was not much of the hygienic element in what I planned to say. We need to remind ourselves and be reminded by the Spirit to give forth healthy teaching.

Healthy teachings do not provoke debates or arguments. If we give adequate attention to feeding on the Lord, we shall not care to argue. A dining table is not a place for debate or argument; it is a place for feasting and nourishment. In the church life we should not exchange the dining table for a desk. We all need to learn how to put healthy "dishes" on the dining table to feed the saints.

II. CONCERNING THE AGED MEN

In the foregoing message we pointed out that in fighting the battle for the truth, we need to maintain excellent relationships with others. Our behavior needs to be according to the highest standard and also very human. In every area of our daily life and family life we must be proper.

In the three Epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus Paul emphasizes the importance of a proper humanity. In 2:2

Paul speaks to the aged men and says, "Aged men are to be temperate, grave, of a sober mind, healthy in faith, in love, in endurance."

A. Temperate

According to this verse, the aged men are to be temperate. To be temperate is to have self-control and to be moderate. It is often easier for an elderly person to be offended or angered than it is for a young person to be bothered in this way. As an elderly person myself, I can testify that in a family it is usually the older ones who become irritated or impatient. Today I can be bothered by certain irritations or nuisances that did not affect me in the least fifty years ago. This indicates that, as an elderly man, I need Paul's charge to be temperate. Of course, temperateness is a virtue needed by everyone in the church life.

B. Grave

Elderly men should also be grave. Gravity is a qualification of human character which is worthy of utmost respect. It implies dignity and it inspires honor and invites it. Gravity is a virtue which invites the respect of others.

C. Of a Sober Mind

In verse 2 Paul charges the aged men to be of a sober mind. He says the same concerning young women (v. 5) and younger men (v. 6). In 1 Timothy 3:2 Paul lists this among the qualifications of an overseer. To be of a sober mind is to be sensible and also discreet in understanding. No matter what our age may be, we all need a sober mind. If we are of a sober mind, we shall avoid the extremes of being too hot or too cold. On the one hand, we need to be burning in spirit; on the other hand, we need to be of a sober mind. If we would be a proper human being, we need this quality.

D. Healthy

1. In Faith

If we would be healthy in faith, we need daily to be under the transfusion which comes through the organic union between us and the Triune God. The word faith in verse 2 does not refer to the objective faith, to the things we believe, but to our activity of believing. In our daily living we need a faith which keeps us in the organic union. In order to be healthy in faith, we need to come to the Word and contact the Lord by praying in a living way with our spirit. Then we shall have faith, the infusion of the living God into us through our contact with the Word in the spirit. Faith, therefore, is a living Person infused into us. The more we remain in the organic union with this divine Person, the more healthy we shall be in faith.

2. In Love

If we are healthy in faith, we shall automatically be healthy in love. It is possible to love others too much or too little. In either case, our love is not healthy. Instead, we are somewhat sick in our love.

Why do you love a certain brother very much and another brother hardly at all? It is because you love others according to your own taste. In Philippians 2:2 Paul says that we should have the same love. This means that our love for all the saints should be on the same level. To have a different love for different saints is to be unhealthy in love. But to have the same love for all is to be healthy in love.

3. In Endurance

According to Titus 2:2, aged men should also be healthy in endurance. If we have adequate endurance, we shall be able to bear the things which bother us and trouble us. We have pointed out that it is rather easy for an elderly person to be bothered. As one who has many children and grandchildren and who is involved with so many churches and co-workers, I can testify of the need for endurance. For

example, I need endurance simply to care for all the mail I receive day by day. I receive so much mail that I have developed a filing system to categorize and arrange it. Even this takes endurance. If I were short of endurance, I would not know what to do with all this mail.

Especially those of us who are elderly need endurance. The older we become, the greater is our need of endurance. In particular, the elders in a church need endurance. For example, sometimes telephone calls come late at night. To take care of such a call in a proper way requires endurance.

Once again I wish to emphasize the fact that in the church life we aspire to live a proper human life, with all the human virtues. We do not want to be angelic. Our desire is to be genuinely human.

III. CONCERNING THE AGED WOMEN

In verses 3 and 4 Paul speaks concerning aged women: "Aged women likewise are to be in demeanor as befits the sacred, not slanderers, nor enslaved by much wine, teachers of what is good, that they may train the young women to be lovers of their husbands, lovers of their children." Paul's use of the word "likewise" indicates that the behavior of the aged women should be similar to that of the aged men. In demeanor they should be as befits the sacred. Demeanor means deportment and includes gesture and habit. The word sacred refers to those who are engaged in sacred things. This may be a special term referring to our service in the church. Any service in the church is sacred, and our demeanor should match this sacred service. Demeanor includes everything we are in our attitude, appearance, and deportment. All this should befit that part of the church service in which we participate. Especially the elderly sisters should have a demeanor which befits the sacred things, the things related to the service of the church.

Paul also says that aged women should not be slanderers. The Devil is a slanderer (Rev. 12:10). To slander is to practice the nature of the evil slanderer. An

elderly sister should flee slander, the evil act of the Devil.

In verse 3 Paul also mentions not "enslaved by much wine." This word enslaved can be compared to the word addicted used in 1 Timothy 3:8. To be enslaved may be worse than to be addicted. The aged women certainly should not be slaves of wine.

Paul also says that the aged women should be "teachers of what is good" and train the young women. To be teachers of what is good is to give good instruction.

IV. CONCERNING THE YOUNG WOMEN

In verses 4 and 5 we see that the young women are to be "lovers of their husbands, lovers of their children, of a sober mind, chaste, workers at home, good, subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed." The aged women should train the young women to love their husbands and their children. In the church life we strongly emphasize the need of a proper married life and family life. According to Paul's word, we desire that the sisters love their husbands and children in an absolute way. Furthermore the young women should be sober, chaste, workers at home, kind, and subject to their own husbands so that the word of God may not be blasphemed. The word of God properly and adequately taught in a local church should be testified to by the sisters' submission to their own husbands. Otherwise, the word of God may be blasphemed, ill spoken of, reproached.

V. CONCERNING THE YOUNGER MEN

Verse 6 says, "The younger men likewise exhort to be of a sober mind." Paul's use of the word likewise indicates that the charge to the younger men is similar to that given to the others. In particular, Paul tells Titus to exhort the younger men to be of a sober mind. We have pointed out that in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus Paul emphasizes the need for all the saints, young and old, male and female, to be of a sober mind. Everyone in the church life needs a sober mind. This is especially needed during the decline of

the church. To guard against any decline, all of us in the local churches need to be of a sober mind.

VI. THE APOSTLE'S CHARGE

In verses 7 and 8 Paul issues a charge directly to Titus: "Concerning all things show yourself a pattern of good works: in teaching with uncorruptness, gravity, healthy speech that cannot be condemned, in order that the opposer may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us." The apostle first charged Titus to speak things fitting to healthy teaching (v. 1). Now he further charges him to show himself a pattern of good works. In his teaching, which should be healthy, he should show three things: uncorruptness, nothing corrupted or corrupting, but everything pure, genuine, and sincere in content, presentation, and motive; gravity, dignity worthy of respect; and healthy speech, discourse given with healthy words (1 Tim. 6:3) to minister healthy things, speech which is uncensurable, irreprehensible (v. 8). Such speech will cause the opposers to be put to shame. The Greek word rendered opposer in verse 8 means the one of the opposite, contrary, side; that is, the heathen or Jewish opposer. The healthy teaching with the healthy speech of healthy words is the most effective antidote to the opposer's evil speaking. Such light-shedding and life-imparting teaching of the word of the truth always stops the mouth of doctrinal opinion instigated by the old serpent.

LIFE-STUDY OF TITUS

MESSAGE FOUR

CHARGING SLAVES TO BEHAVE WELL IN THE SOCIAL SYSTEM OF SLAVERY

Scripture Reading: Titus 2:9-15

In the book of Titus Paul gives instructions concerning the church life, the family life, the behavior of slaves in the social system of slavery, and the saints' relationship with the government. Chapter one mainly deals with the church life. Regarding the church life, Paul covers two main points in this chapter: the government of the church and the proper teaching in the church. The church's government is built upon the proper eldership, and the teaching in the church is based on the healthy teaching of the apostles. This healthy teaching swallows up every kind of ism, in particular Judaism and Gnosticism, and every type of differing teaching. If we would have a church life which is healthy and in good order, there must be in the church the proper administration and healthy teaching according to the ministry of the apostles.

In 2:1-8 Paul speaks concerning an orderly human life. In particular, he speaks of the family life. These eight verses give us the foundation of a proper human life in the divine life. We in the Lord's recovery should live such a human life. For the testimony of Jesus we need the highest human life, a life lived out according to the divine life given to us by God. By the divine life we need to have a human life that reaches the highest standard. In our living we should be Jesusly human. We should aspire to have a glorious testimony of the Christ in whom we believe and whom we serve and honor. Then we shall be a shining, golden lampstand. This is our declaration concerning human living.

After speaking of the church and of the family life, Paul goes on to charge the slaves to behave well in the social system of slavery (2:9-15). Certainly Paul did not agree with the system of slavery. However, as a teacher appointed by God and as one with spiritual insight, he did not touch the existing social system. If he had done so, he would have given others the impression that he was a social reformer and not a teacher of God's economy, a herald of the good news. Paul did not involve himself with reformation of the social system. On the contrary, he gave instructions to slaves concerning the need to behave according to the highest standard of human character. The slaves were to have an excellent testimony of the life of Jesus in their human living.

If Paul had advocated the annulment of the system of slavery, he would have been regarded as a social reformer by those who read his Epistles. That would have obscured Paul's teaching concerning the living out of Christ's divine life in our human living in the midst of any kind of social system. In order to guarantee that the light would shine without hindrance, Paul did not say a word about the social system in the way of correcting it or reforming it.

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He did not touch the social system. Instead, He lived as a typical Jew in a country under the control of the Roman imperialists. The Lord Jesus was born during the time of Caesar Augustus. At the time of His trial, judgment was pronounced upon Him by Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea. The Lord Jesus said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). The Lord's kingdom was not earthly; it was heavenly in nature. For this reason, when He was on earth, the Lord Jesus did not deal with the social system or with any earthly government. Paul displayed the same attitude. He did not try to reform the Roman social system.

When the Epistle of Titus was written, a number of slaves had become believers in Christ. According to civil law, a slave had no rights. A master could brand a slave as if he were a horse or a mule. Furthermore, a master could

legally put a slave to death. What a dreadful system! To be sure, God was utterly opposed to such a social system, for it was altogether contrary to the place of man in His creation. Paul certainly did not approve of this evil social system. But instead of trying to reform it, he charged the slaves to behave well in it, to live in it according to the standard of the humanity of the Lord Jesus. Even in the midst of such an unjust social system, Christians could live out a life with the highest standard of humanity. What a testimony this is!

No matter how bad certain social systems may be today, none are as bad as the system of slavery in the Roman Empire. For the saints to live a Jesusly human life in that kind of social system was a marvelous testimony of the divine life. It was God's wisdom that a slave, bought and branded like an animal, could testify of the divine life according to the highest standard.

Some have criticized Paul for not trying to reform the social system. We realize, however, that Paul used the worst social system as an opportunity to charge the believers to live a Jesusly human life in the midst of it. If the saints could live such a human life in the worst social system imaginable, then we should be able to live such a life in any kind of circumstances today. Praise the Lord that by the divine life we can have the highest human living even in the worst social system!

I. THE CHARGE TO THE SLAVES

In verses 9 and 10 Paul says, "Slaves are to be subject to their own masters in all things, to be well pleasing, not contradicting, not pilfering, but showing all good faith that they may adorn the teachings of our Savior God in all things." The slaves here are not servants, but bondslaves bought in the market like oxen and horses. Paul charges them to be subject to their own masters in all things. They had no choice, and there was to be no argument. Moreover, the slaves were not to pilfer. On the contrary, they were to show all good faith. Faith here means fidelity,

trustworthiness. In this way they would adorn the teachings of our Savior God. The faithfulness of a bondslave can be the ornament of the teaching of God our Savior. He would even accept adornment from bondslaves!

In 2:5 Paul charges the young women to live in such a way that "the word of God may not be blasphemed." In 2:10 he speaks positively of adorning the teaching of our Savior God. Our daily living should be a beautiful adornment to the teaching we have received. If we live according to the healthy teaching of the apostles, we shall adorn these teachings by our living. If we have a bright testimony of a living which is Jesusly human, our neighbors will realize that we are genuine Christians. They will confess that our living is the adornment of the teachings we have received in the Lord's recovery. We should live not only in a way that is different from that of others, but in a way that is higher and more respectable. Others may even desire to follow us, because they have observed the high standard of our daily life. They may seek to learn how they can have such a life themselves.

In 2:10 Paul speaks of "our Savior God." Our Savior is not only Christ, but God Triune embodied in Christ, as indicated in verse 13. Our Savior God desires not only to save us, but also to teach us the full knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). Hence. there is the teaching of our Savior God, which may be adorned, beautified, by the transformed character of the most vile persons saved by His grace.

II. THE GRACE OF GOD

Verse 11 begins with the little word for, indicating that what is to follow explains how it is possible for slaves to have a human living according to God's standard. Verses 11 through 14 give us a remarkable summary of the economy of God's salvation. The apostle uses this as a reason for his exhortations in verses 1 through 10.

Verse 11 says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men." The grace of God is actually

God Himself in Christ as everything to us for our enjoyment. This grace plays the most important role in the economy of God's salvation. Grace came through Christ (John 1:17). It was given to us in eternity (2 Tim. 1:9), but was hidden in the Old Testament. It appeared in the New Testament through the first appearing of Christ (2 Tim. 1:10), bringing salvation to all men, both Jews and Gentiles.

The eternal grace of God, the saving grace, was destined in Christ to bring to us His salvation, the complete salvation which includes forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, redemption, regeneration, sanctification, transformation, and conformation. The eternal grace of God was also destined to redeem us back to God, to impart His life to us, and to bring us into an organic union with Him for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose.

In verse 12 Paul says that the grace of God is training us that, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in the present age." Worldly lusts are lusts that find their gratification in this world. Ungodliness is the failure to express God; worldly lusts are the expression of our flesh. Both of these should be denied that we may live a God-expressing and flesh-restricting life. To live soberly is to live discreetly, in a way of self-restriction. Soberly is in regard to ourselves; righteously, to others; and godly, to God.

By the grace of God we are being trained to live soberly, righteously, and godly. This requires that we deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. Ungodliness is a living which does not express God. We should not have anything to do with the life that fails to express God. Furthermore, we should abandon whatever attracts us to earthly things or draws us to them. Forsaking ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live a life which is sober toward ourselves, righteous toward others, and godly toward God.

In verse 13 Paul continues, "Awaiting the blessed hope, even the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior, Christ Jesus." We are to await expectantly what is

accepted in faith. According to verse 13, we are awaiting the blessed hope, which is the appearing of Christ in His glory. The appearing of Christ will bring us into full sonship, that is, the redemption of our body, that we may enjoy the freedom of the glory of the children of God for which we have been saved (Rom. 8:21-25). This is the hope of eternal life (Titus 1:2), a hope of eternal blessing, a blessed hope in the eternal life of the Triune God, based upon which Paul became an apostle.

In verse 13 Paul speaks of the glory of the great God; that is the glory of the Father (Matt. 16:27) which has been given to the Son (John 17:24) and into which we, as the many sons of God, will be brought (Heb. 2:10). Unto this glory God by His wisdom has ordained us before the ages (1 Cor. 2:7), and into this eternal glory the God of all grace has called us and saved us (1 Pet. 5:10; 2 Tim. 2:10). The weight of this glory is eternal (2 Cor. 4:17), and with it we shall be glorified (Rom. 8:17, 30). The appearing of this glory of Christ, our great God and Savior, is the blessed hope which we are awaiting.

In verse 13 Paul speaks of "the great God and our Savior, Christ Jesus." Through the centuries there have been two schools of interpretation regarding this remarkable, marvelous, and excellent sacred and divine title. According to one school, two Persons are indicated, God and Christ. According to the other school, there is but one Person, Christ Jesus being the great God and our Savior, thus asserting the deity of Christ. We prefer the second, with a comma after Savior. This corresponds to the two sacred titles revealed at the birth of Christ: Jesus, Jehovah the Savior, and Emmanuel, God with us (Matt. 1:21-23). Our Lord is not only our Savior, but also God, and not merely God, but the great God, the God who is great in nature, in glory, in authority, in power, in deed, in love, in grace, and in every divine attribute. In 1 Timothy 2:5 our Lord is revealed as a man; here, as the great God. He is both man and God. His appearing in His divine glory will be not only for saving His people into the kingdom age, but

also for the judgment of the entire world, that He may bring the kingdom of God to this earth. Hence, His appearing in His glory is the blessed hope.

Whether or not we shall be happy at the time of the Lord's appearing depends on our living as Christians today. According to Matthew 25, all the Lord's servants will give an account to Him at His coming. To some the Lord will say, "Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things; enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matt. 25:21). But others the Lord will rebuke as evil and slothful slaves (v. 26). The evil and slothful slave is not an unbeliever or a false believer. How could someone who is not a genuine believer in the Lord receive a talent from Him, and how could a false believer meet the Lord at His judgment seat in the air? Such things are impossible. Only genuine believers are spoken of here.

Many of today's Christians will find themselves in a sorrowful situation at the time of the Lord's coming. Instead of being commended by the Lord, they will be rebuked by Him. Oh, the superficiality among Christians today! Many have been drugged by superficial teachings concerning the Lord's coming. They do not have a heart for the healthy teachings regarding God's economy. Because they have been drugged, they imagine that they will have no problems with the Lord at the time of His appearing. They do not seem to realize that, according to Paul's word in 2 Timothy 4:8, the Lord will appear as the righteous Judge. At that time, a great many Christians will hear a very sobering word from the Lord. However, I prefer to hear a sobering word from Him today. In contrast to much of the preaching among Christians today, the ministry in the Lord's recovery does not present sugar-coated teachings. On the contrary, sobering messages are given to the saints.

In verse 14 Paul says that Christ "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all lawlessness and purify to Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works." The words "for us" here mean on our behalf. They

do not mean instead of us. To redeem means to buy with a price (1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:6). Christ gave Himself for us not only that He might redeem us from all lawlessness, but also purify to Himself a people for His own possession. A people for His possession are a peculiar people. This expression is borrowed from the Old Testament (Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18) and denotes a people privately possessed by God as His peculiar treasure (Exo. 19:5), His own possession (1 Pet 2:9).

III. THE APOSTLE'S CHARGE TO TITUS

In verse 15 we have the apostle's charge to Titus: "These things speak, and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one despise you." By "these things" Paul means all the things in verses 1 through 14. Titus was charged to speak these things and to exhort and reprove with all authority. Authority here also means imperativeness. The literal meaning of the Greek word is command. With all authority modifies both exhort and reprove. To exhort and reprove with all authority is to advise and rebuke imperatively with words of authority in every way, as giving command.

Paul's exhortation, "Let no one despise you," is connected with the matter of authority in the preceding sentence. It is the conclusion of all the charges to Titus in this chapter. It mainly concerns his teaching (vv. 1, 7-8, 15). The healthy teaching with the healthy word according to godliness would keep him in gravity and invite the utmost respect.

LIFE-STUDY OF TITUS

MESSAGE FIVE

CHARGING THE SAINTS TO KEEP A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT

Scripture Reading: Titus 3:1-8

When Paul was writing the Epistle of Titus, there were certain basic concepts within him. These concepts were the factors, the elements, of the composition of this book. In writing chapter one of Titus, Paul was deeply concerned for the church. Hence, in this chapter he takes care of the proper order in the church and speaks of establishing the eldership for the administration of a local church, of the termination of the various isms, and of holding to the healthy teaching of the apostles. Paul goes on in chapter two to speak of an orderly human life, which is primarily related to the family life. Then, as we have seen in the foregoing message, he speaks of society, or of the social system. In 3:1-8 Paul speaks of the rulers, that is, the government.

To have an orderly life, we need to take care of four units: the church, the family, the social system, and the government. If we care for these units properly, we shall have an orderly life in every way. When Paul was writing the book of Titus, he had within him a concern for these four units. Unbelievers, of course, care only for family, society, and government. Even the philosophers and thoughtful people throughout the centuries have considered only these three units among mankind. But among us in the Lord's recovery the most important unit is the church. For us, the church is first. We give the church preeminence in our consideration, for the church is the house of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth. Furthermore, the church is the great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh. Paul covered the matter of

the church first in this Epistle, and we follow him to give the church the first place among the four basic units covered in this book.

After the church, the most important unit is the family. Some opposers have tried to defame us by spreading the devilish lie that we do not care for the family life. Next to the church, the family is the most important unit in society. Without a proper family life, how could we have a healthy society or country? A nation is constituted of families as the basic factors. We fully realize that without a proper family life it is difficult to have an orderly church life. But we also realize that without a proper church life it is difficult to have a normal and proper family life. We are here for the church and also for the family. Furthermore, we care for society. We respect others, we honor our neighbors, and we care for the existing social system. We are not here as social reformers, and it is not our intention to change the social system. In the Lord's recovery we are here to present to others healthy teachings concerning the all-inclusive Christ and the church as the Body of Christ.

A CHARGE TO THE SAINTS

In this message we are concerned with Paul's charge to the saints to maintain a good relationship with the government. According to the healthy teaching in the New Testament, we must respect the government.

In 3:1 and 2 Paul says, "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready unto every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be uncontentious, forbearing, showing all meekness toward all men." To be subject to rulers is to recognize God's authority and respect His government over men (Rom. 13:1-2). To be uncontentious (v. 2) is to be peaceable, not quarrelsome.

Before Paul could teach the saints to respect the government, he himself had to experience a certain amount of transformation. When he was Saul of Tarsus, he was a patriotic Jew and wanted to be free from the yoke of

the Roman imperialists. But here he instructs the saints to subject themselves to rulers and to authorities. According to his word in Romans 13, government officials have been appointed by God. Paul recognized that even those officials appointed by Caesar are rulers appointed by God, His deputy authority. If Paul had not been transformed from a natural person into a spiritual person with spiritual understanding, it would have been difficult for him to give such instructions.

GOD'S SUPPLY

To care for the church life, the family life, the social system, and the government, we need a specific supply. In speaking of these four units, Paul also tells us of the divine supply. We have seen that in chapter one Paul speaks concerning the church life. The supply for the church life consists of the faith of God's chosen ones, the full knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, and the hope of eternal life (1:1-2). Eternal life in particular is the supply which enables us to have the church life. The word of proclamation (1:3) is another aspect of the supply for the proper church life.

Just as there is a supply for the church life, there is also a supply for the family life. The supply for the proper family life includes healthy teaching (2:1), healthy speech (2:8), and being healthy in faith, in love, and in endurance (2:2). For the family unit we need the supply of healthy teaching and healthy speech. The word speech in 2:8 refers to our ordinary daily conversation, such as conversation at the dinner table. If our speech is healthy, it will supply us that we may have a proper family life.

We have seen that in 2:9-15 Paul charges the slaves to behave well in the social system of slavery. This indicates that we need to have the proper attitude toward society. But what is the supply for living in the existing social system? This supply is the grace of God which has appeared, bringing salvation to all men and training us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age as we

await the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior, Christ Jesus (2:11-13). By means of this supply we can adorn the teaching of our Savior God in all things.

The supply which enables us to keep a good relationship with the government is wonderful. Paul speaks of this supply in 3:4-7. Prior to this, he says in verse 3, "For we also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving as slaves various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another." We should remember that in nature we were once the same as others, living in the fallen condition; therefore, we should sympathize with their pitiful life and pray for their salvation (1 Tim. 2:1, 4). We also once served as slaves various lusts, various desires and gratifications. But now we have a marvelous supply to have a good relationship with the government.

KINDNESS, LOVE, AND MERCY

Verse 4 says, "But when the kindness and love to man of our Savior God appeared." It is the kindness and love of our Savior God that has saved us and made us different from others.

In verse 5 Paul continues, "Not by works in righteousness which we have done but according to His mercy, He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." Titus 2:11 says that the grace of God brings salvation to man, and 3:7 says that we have been justified by the grace of the Lord. But verse 5 says that according to His mercy He saved us. God's mercy reaches farther than His grace. Our pitiful condition created a wide gap between us and God's grace. It was God's mercy that has bridged this gap and brought us to His salvation of grace.

Notice that in 3:4-5 Paul does not speak of grace, but speaks of kindness, love, and mercy. Love is the source of grace. In the heart of God the Father there is love. But when this love is expressed through the Son, it becomes

grace. For this reason, 2 Corinthians 13:14 speaks of the grace of Christ and the love of the Father. In John 1:16 and 17 we have grace; however, in 1 John we touch the love of God the Father as the source of this grace.

What, then, are mercy and kindness? We have pointed out that mercy always reaches farther than grace. When we are in a proper situation, God's love will come to us as grace. However, we were all in a pitiful situation and may still be in such a situation today. Therefore, we need God's mercy to reach us. The mercy of God can come to us even in our pitiful situation.

Kindness is God's attitude in giving grace to us. It is possible to give a gift to a person without having a proper attitude. For example, I may give a valuable gift to a brother but give it in a rather crude, insensitive manner. On the other hand, I may give him a gift in a way that expresses an attitude of kindness. God's attitude in giving us grace is the attitude of kindness.

When we have mercy, love, and kindness, we automatically have grace. Our God and Father has shown us love, mercy, and kindness. It is by this that He saves us.

WASHING AND RENEWING

According to verse 5, God's salvation is also through certain action: the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. In Greek, the word for regeneration in verse 5 is different from that for born again (1 Pet. 1:23). The only other place this word is used is in Matthew 19:28 for the restoration in the millennium. Here it refers to a change from one state of things to another. To be born again is the beginning of this change. The washing of regeneration begins with our being born again and continues with the renewing of the Holy Spirit as the process of God's new creation to make us a new man. It is a kind of reconditioning, remaking, remodeling with life. Baptism (Rom. 6:3-5), the putting off of the old man, the putting on of the new man (Eph. 4:22, 24; Col. 3:9-11), and transformation by the renewing of the mind (Rom 12:2;

Eph. 4:23) are all related to this wonderful process. The washing of regeneration purges away all the things of the old nature of our old man, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit imparts something new--the divine essence of the new man--into our being. In this is a passage from the old state we were in into a wholly new one, from the old creation into the status of a new creation. Hence, both the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit are a continual working in us throughout our whole life until the completion of the new creation.

In 1 Timothy the church is stressed (3:15-16), in 2 Timothy the Scripture (3:15-16), and in Titus the Holy Spirit. The church is the house of the living God, expressing God in the flesh, and the pillar and base of the truth, the divine reality of the great mystery--God manifested in the flesh. The Scripture is the breath of God, containing and conveying His divine essence for our nourishment and equipment to make us perfect and complete for His use. The Holy Spirit is the divine Person, washing and renewing us in the divine element to make us a new creation with the divine nature to be heirs of God in His eternal life, inheriting all the riches of the Triune God.

Verse 6 says that the Holy Spirit has been "poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior." The Holy Spirit, Who is the Triune God reaching man, has not only been given to us, but poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Savior, to bring all the divine riches in Christ to us, including the eternal life of God and His divine nature, for our eternal portion.

HEIRS ACCORDING TO THE HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE

In verse 7 Paul goes on to say, "That, having been justified by the grace of that One, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." This speaks forth the issue and goal of God's salvation (v. 5) and justification, including the washing of regeneration and renewing of the

Holy Spirit. The issue and goal is to make us heirs of God according to the hope of eternal life.

According to verse 7, the believers are not only sons, but also heirs who are qualified to inherit the Father's estate (Rom. 4:14; 8:17; Gal. 3:29; 4:7). We are born of God (John 1:12-13) with His eternal life (John 3:16). This eternal life is for us not only to live and enjoy God in this age, but also to inherit all the riches of what He is to us in the coming age and in eternity. Hence, there is the hope of eternal life. God's eternal life is our enjoyment today and our hope tomorrow. According to this hope we become heirs of God to inherit all His riches for eternity. This is the climax as the eternal goal of His eternal salvation with His eternal life given to us by grace in Christ.

A CHARGE TO TITUS

In verse 8 Paul concludes this section of Titus: "Faithful is the word, and concerning these things I desire you to affirm confidently, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men." The faithful word here is given in verses 3 through 7, and these things are the things mentioned in verses 1 through 7. To affirm confidently is to affirm consistently, steadfastly, positively, with persistence and thoroughness. It is the same word used in 1 Timothy 1:7.

In speaking concerning the church life, the family life, the social system, and the government, Paul does not give empty instructions. Along with the instructions, he points us to the source of the supply. For the church life, we have the faith of God's chosen ones, the full knowledge of the truth, eternal life with its hope, and the word of proclamation which causes eternal life to be manifested. For the family life, we have healthy words, healthy teaching, and healthy speech. For the social system, we have the grace of God which has saved us and which is now training us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age. For a good relationship with the government, we have the marvelous supply described in 3:1-8. Therefore, we have

the divine supply for a proper church life, family life, social life, and relationship with the government. We have a proper relationship with all these units not by ethical teachings, philosophical instruction, or our natural life and ability. On the contrary, we have a heavenly, divine, and spiritual supply for the church, family, society, and government.

LIFE-STUDY OF TITUS

MESSAGE SIX

DEALING WITH A FACTIOUS ONE

Scripture Reading: Titus 3:9-15

Before we consider 3:9-15, we need a further word on verses 4 through 7. In verse 7 Paul says, "That, having been justified by the grace of that One, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Becoming heirs of God is the goal of His eternal salvation with His eternal life given to us by grace in Christ. In verses 4 through 6 we see some crucial matters needed to reach God's goal. In verses 4 and 5 we read of certain divine attributes: kindness, love, and mercy. When these attributes are put together, we have grace. God has exercised His love, mercy, kindness, and grace in order to save us. Whenever we are about to do something of great importance, we exercise our whole being. Our mind, will, emotion, heart, and even our disposition are exercised. In like manner, God exercised His being in order to save us. He exercised His love, kindness, mercy, and grace. By means of these divine attributes God has saved us. These attributes, however, are the source; they are not the activity or the process.

In 3:5 and 6 we have activity, an action, constituting the process through which God saved us: "He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, Whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior." God's salvation is based upon the exercise of His attributes and through the process of the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. The goal is that we become God's heirs.

Paul certainly was an excellent writer. Knowing that in verses 4 through 6 he had not written anything concerning

justification, he inserts the words "having been justified by the grace of that One." Although justification is somewhat implied by the matters of salvation and washing, Paul mentions it explicitly in verse 7. We have been saved, washed, and justified. The grace by which we are justified is the totality of God's kindness, love, and mercy. These attributes are of God. But when they become a totality in our experience, that is grace. Kindness, love, and mercy are of the Father, whereas grace is of Christ, of "that One." For this reason, in 2 Corinthians 13:14 Paul speaks of the grace of Christ and of the love of God the Father.

In 3:7 Paul says that we become heirs according to the hope of eternal life, whereas in 1:1 and 2 he says that he became an apostle in the hope of eternal life. This eternal life meant a great deal to Paul. It also means a great deal to us as believers. Paul became an apostle in the hope of eternal life, and we become heirs of God according to the hope of eternal life. Why does Paul use the word "in" when speaking of himself and the word "according to" when speaking of us? The fact that he used the word "in" with respect to himself indicates that he was already experiencing the hope of eternal life. But because we have not yet entered into this experience to a very great extent, he says that we are heirs according to the hope of eternal life. As a very matured believer, Paul was experiencing the hope already. He was in it. But, for the most part, this experience lies ahead of us. Therefore, we are heirs according to this hope.

I. THE APOSTLE'S CHARGE

In 3:9 Paul goes on to say, "But avoid foolish questionings and genealogies and strifes and contentions about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain." The questionings here are those aroused by genealogies (1 Tim. 1:4), and the strifes issue out of the questionings and genealogies. Contentions refer to fightings, which are due to different opinions issuing from the deviant and mythological studies of the law. The law in this verse is the

law of the Jews used for Gnostic Judaism, which stood in opposition to the simplicity of the gospel. These questionings, genealogies, strifes, and contentions are all vain; that is, they are aimless, without any positive result.

The positive things stressed in verses 4 through 8 should be affirmed strongly and consistently, positive things including our Savior God, Jesus Christ our Savior, the Holy Spirit, God's kindness, love, mercy, grace, and eternal life, with His acts of justifying, saving, washing, regenerating, and renewing. These are the Triune God with His attributes and virtues, plus His divine actions in His eternal salvation: they are things of life, which belong to the tree of life (Gen. 2:9) and produce heirs to inherit all that He is for them. The negative things dealt with in verses 9 through 11 should be avoided. These things include foolish questionings, genealogies, strifes, contentions about the law, and factious, opinionated men. These matters are of the knowledge that is deadening, matters that belong to the tree of knowledge and kill their victims.

Paul's word about avoiding foolish questionings, genealogies, strifes, and contentions corresponds to what he says about teaching differently in 1 Timothy 1. Differing teachings had begun to creep into the church, and Paul charges Titus to avoid them.

The Lord's ministry is not the teaching of any individual. The ministry is the teaching of God's New Testament economy. This means that the Lord's ministry is the healthy teaching which conveys to us the New Testament economy. Unfortunately, most of today's Christian teachers have missed the mark of God's economy. God's economy may be likened to a kernel or a grain. Most Christian teachers pay attention not to the kernel, but to the stem, the leaves, and even to the husks. They may argue and debate over husks and neglect the kernel.

In Colossians 1:25 Paul says, "I became a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God." To complete the word of God means to complete the divine revelation. This

completion of the word of God is the mystery of Christ. This expression refers both to Christ and to His mystery. The mystery of Christ is the church. The content of the teaching of the New Testament economy is the all-inclusive Christ and the church as the Body of Christ.

Any teaching which deviates from this central focus should be regarded as a differing teaching. For example, suppose a certain Christian teacher insists that we baptize people in the name of Jesus Christ, not in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and not even in the name of Christ Jesus. Although such a teaching may be presented in a way which sounds fundamental and scriptural, it is actually a differing teaching because it emphasizes something other than the focus of God's economy and distracts the saints from the proper church life. Yes, the Bible commands us to be baptized. But we should not be influenced by differing teachings related to the name in which the believers are baptized. To pay too much attention to such matters will cause us to be distracted from God's economy.

It is not the goal of the Lord's recovery to recover doctrinal truths. The goal of the recovery is to bring us back to God's New Testament economy, which is Christ and the church. What the Lord desires of us, and what we ourselves need, is to have our entire being focused on God's economy. In the Lord's recovery we must pay our full attention to Christ and the church.

As we direct our attention to God's economy concerning Christ and the church, we must avoid differing teachings. These teachings may be scriptural, and certain preachers may speak of them in an eloquent, attractive manner. However, we must discern whether or not such speaking is focused on Christ and the church, whether or not it strengthens the believers to live Christ and practice the church life. A person may deliver an excellent message on love from 1 Corinthians 13. However, if he has not seen the vision of the New Testament economy concerning Christ and the church, even his inspiring message on love

may be a distraction. The more he expounds 1 Corinthians 13, the more those who listen to him are distracted from Christ and from the church life. Instead, they pay their attention to love.

Many seeking Christians have been distracted not by heresies, but by good teachings on certain favorite portions of the Bible. Many Christians are impressed by 1 Corinthians 13, and they appreciate messages on this chapter. But although they may talk a great deal about love and about the need to love one another, they neglect the church life.

Christians today appreciate the book of Psalms. For many, Psalms is their favorite book in the Bible. Paying our full attention to the Psalms, however, may distract us from living Christ and may encourage and strengthen us to be merely believers who emphasize the devotional life. Furthermore, some may be distracted from the church life and even completely neglect it. They may even criticize certain ones in the church for not emphasizing the devotional time the way they do.

How are we to discern which messages to receive and which to avoid? Although we must oppose heresy, we should not oppose teachings which are not heretical. But we should not pay attention to teachings that are not focused on God's economy, even though they are sound. We need to avoid differing teachings and concentrate on God's economy concerning Christ and the church.

II. DEALING WITH A FACTIOUS MAN

Titus 3:10 and 11 say, "A factious man after a first and second admonition refuse, knowing that such a one has been perverted and sins, being self-condemned." A factious man is a heretical, sectarian man who causes divisions by forming parties in the church according to his own opinions. The Gnostic Judaism referred to in the preceding verse must be related to this. The divisiveness is based on differing teachings. This is the reason that verse 10 comes

after verse 9. Certain believers may have insisted on the teaching of the law and in so doing became divisive.

In verse 10 Paul charges Titus to refuse a factious man after a first and second admonition. In order to maintain good order in the church, a factious, divisive person, after a first and second admonition, should be refused, rejected. Because such divisiveness is contagious, this rejection is for the church's profit that contact with the divisive one be stopped.

In verse 11 Paul speaks a severe word, saying that a factious man has been perverted, that he sins, and that he is self-condemned. Literally, the Greek words rendered "has been perverted" mean turned out of the way. It is more than being turned away from the right path (Titus 1:14). One who has been perverted in this way is spoiled, damaged, destroyed, with respect to God's New Testament economy.

Paul tells us that factious persons are self-condemned. When a factious person is alone, deep within he may become conscious of a feeling of condemnation. He knows that he does not have genuine peace. With his tongue he may say that he is not condemned, but deep in his heart he has questions and a sense of uneasiness. Some of those who left the Lord's recovery argued strongly about various things. But deep within they did not have true peace. Instead, they were self-condemned. If they did not have a feeling of condemnation within, they would not struggle to vindicate themselves and to convince others they are right. Their efforts at self-vindication are a sign of their self-condemnation.

III. THE CONCLUSION OF THE BOOK

A. The Apostle's Fellowship

In verses 12 and 13 Paul says, "When I send Artemas to you or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me to Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Zenas the lawyer and Apollos send forward diligently that nothing may be

lacking to them." Nicopolis was a city in the southwestern corner of Macedonia, where this Epistle was written. Artemas and Tychicus were intimate fellow-workers of Paul; Zenas and Apollos worked independently of him. Yet Paul still charged Titus to care for them, showing there was no jealousy between the two groups of co-workers.

Paul's word in verse 14 is related to what he says in verse 13: "And let those also who are ours learn to maintain good works for necessary needs, that they may not be unfruitful." They were to take care of the needs of the Lord's servants and to help them on their way.

B. Greetings

In verse 15 Paul concludes, "All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in faith. Grace be with you all." The faith here is subjective and denotes our believing act which brings us into organic union with the Lord (John 3:15; Gal. 3:26) and operates through love (Gal. 5:6). It is in the element and operation of this faith that the saints who were one with the Lord in His concern loved the suffering and faithful apostle.