

Titus 1:5-9

This week's paragraph finds us looking at Titus 1:5-9. The larger thought runs from verses 5 through 16, but for the sake of our approach, we will consider this thought in two studies.

Our initial paragraph showed how a "knowledge of the truth" produces "godliness" (v. 1). These "two" ideas are inseparably linked. This will be a reoccurring theme throughout Titus: "The JESUS SEED always produces GOSPEL FRUIT." We have reduced this larger thought to the simple statement, **JESUS works**. As we will see, these two ideas were either separated from each other or reversed from their proper order in the church of Crete. Either way, it was an error with far-reaching implications. Apparently, as the church gathered in the homes of the believing, key people began teaching this false gospel and as a result whole families were upset (v. 11).

The word "order" in verse 5 is of interest. It is the word *epidiorthoo*. We are a little familiar with the word because of *orthodoxy* [i.e. "right/straight thinking"]. Or our English word orthotic [A support, brace, or splint used to support, align, prevent, or correct the function of movable parts of the body] and orthodontist [An orthodontist is a type of dentist who specializes in straightening crooked teeth]. This word in our text means, "To straighten further; to set straight thoroughly in addition to; to set in order."

Things in Crete were moving in the right direction, but needed further straightening. They were slightly off and if not corrected would cause significant shipwreck in the future. "What was left unfinished was the organization of the newly formed churches."¹

When you have tire work done on your car, you need to always make sure your tires are aligned properly. If they are misaligned, there will be a slight vibration in the steering wheel. We often ignore such "minor" misalignments. Sometimes this misalignment is not noticeable until you are going rather fast. Often we simply ignore the problem and allow the tires to wear down to the point of "alignment." But such an alignment is not correct. In fact, in the absence of a properly aligned car, it can go straight, but it will vibrate you without mercy.

This is equally true concerning the church. We have "the teaching" [JESUS works]. If we do not align our ministries with the teaching, there will be a misalignment that results in a slight vibration in the steering. It might be ignored, but it is leading to bigger problems down the road. And if we do not make the necessary adjustments, we will never be able to really get up to speed and go faster and further.

The Elders of the church are to make sure this alignment happens. We have a theological DNA and it is the primary function of the Elders to protect that DNA internally and to promote that DNA externally. If the Elders do not pay due diligence to this, the church will vibrate itself to pieces.

Verses 5 tells us Paul's solution to this problem, "Appoint elders in every town." It is perhaps a modest response to an appalling threat, but the problem was leadership. If the problem was in wrong leadership, then the solution would be in finding the right leaders. The task was daunting. Think about it. Titus was to find men sufficiently schooled in this theology so that they could instruct others in sound doctrine and rebuke those who contradicted it (v. 9). This was to be done "in every town." This text, vv. 5-9, tells Titus what right leaders look like. The first part addresses their character, who they are as individuals. The second part speaks to their task. They are to "give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it" (v. 9). "They were individuals who held firm to the trustworthy word as taught" (v. 9). Wow, such was the means of guarding the gospel.

This two-fold task contributes to the flow of the Letter. In our next paragraph (vv. 10-16), we read of the Elders rebuking those who contradicted sound doctrine. Then in chapter 2:1-10 we read of their instruction in sound doctrine for the family church.

What our current paragraph does (vv. 5-9) is show what GOSPEL FRUIT looks like in those who have the JESUS SEED and occupy the office of Elder. Those appointed as Elders are examples of what "a knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness" (v. 1) looks like in real time. They are living "ordered" lives. This is the appearance of **JESUS works** in the office of Elder. It is only as such individuals occupy the office of Elder that the error permeating the church in Crete would be confronted and corrected. Why, because "ordered" Elders lead "ordered" churches.

The call is one of aligning with the gospel for the sake of God's elect (2 Tim. 1:8; Titus 1:1). Not only were they to push the gospel outward in evangelism [i.e. "for the sake of the elect"]. But they were to push the gospel inward in edification [i.e. "leads to godliness"]. May God enable us to keep the main thing the main thing, so that we would appoint Elders in this local church who exhibit such qualities.

¹ *The Reformation Study Bible* on Titus 1:5.