

Titus

One of the traits of normalcy in humans is to have companions. There are diverse reasons for having good, trusted helpers and companions. We can be a success or failure dependent upon the kind of travelers with which we choose to walk. As a fellow laborer of Paul, we think young Titus must have been just about perfect. When Paul went to Jerusalem to consider the question of circumcision, he took Titus with him.

One of the outstanding qualities in this young man was his dependability. Paul knew he could leave Titus to do a job and things would be accomplished in the right order (Tit. 1:5). How wonderful to be of such genuine and untarnished character and to merit the trust of a man such as Paul. If people can have no confidence in our word, work, and performance; then the world is not profited by our presence in it.

There were many things in Crete that needed to be finished. Paul uses the expression *ta leiponta* which refers to some things which were left undone and also to some things which survive. The church needs stout-hearted and trustworthy men with steel in their spine. Men are needed who are not afraid to tackle the disorderly array both in and out of the church.

The purely positive approach can never set things right in a world which is woefully wrong. The disposition to sing a few lullabies and to whisper a few sweet nothings is one of the reasons for the lack of soundness in the church, and the only remedy is to practice the preachments of Paul when he said, “Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith” (1:13). This is the inspired remedy for slow bellies in any age (1:12).

Titus was instructed by Paul to use “sound speech, that cannot be condemned” (2:8). With all the piping and blowing of sounds which are uncertain, how marvelous it is to hear that doctrine which is sound.

When the wrong becomes so strong, a weak and timid approach will not suffice; hence Paul wrote, “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (2:15). There is that area which is unprofitable, and also there is that which is good and profitable (3:8-9). There is that with which we need to be involved, and there is that which we must avoid.

A careful study of the three chapters which comprise the book of Titus will demonstrate plainly that there is both positive and negative teaching which must be done. Those people who can only endure the positive approach will find the material in Titus extremely dull and of little value. We need to be looking for young men who can be trusted. We need young preachers who have common sense sufficiently to help with the solutions rather than creating the problems.

Titus refused to take advantage of the Corinthians (2 Cor. 12:18). He was the kind of young man who could complete an assignment (8:6). His work took him to Dalmatia, to Corinth, Crete, and other places. Titus was the right man, for the right job, at the right place.

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BELVEDERE BEACON
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On Departures

Now, many of you may well be in a better position to write these lines than am I, but I shall endeavor to do it all the same. Have you noticed that there are many departures from the faith around us today? That implies, of course, that many Christians are leaving the truth and in its place embracing error. One cannot “depart” from that in which he/she never resided. I do know, from personal experience, that many places, once bastions for truth, are now havens for error. Why is this? What is there to do about this?

As to the why, I fear I can offer no reasonable defense for those who have departed from the faith. Some depart through ignorance. Some leave through neglect. Some leave to get numbers. Some depart due to the influence of ungodly men in pulpits and elderships. Whatever the reason, it is sin. It is never right to leave the truth—it matters not who says you should or what *rewards* appear to be in the offing for those who do.

As to what there is to do about it, there is much. I have never preached in a congregation (as a located preacher) in which liberalism/sectarianism/ modernism/denominationalism or the like has taken over. I have preached where they tried to take over. I have left due to the efforts of those who tried to take over—but only after their efforts were defeated and shown to be what they were! But some, sadly, have not been so fortunate. I recently spoke with a friend who was on the “losing side” of a battle for truth. I do not say that truth lost, but that the group opposing the truth had more *votes* and thereby controlled the property. Of course, unless they repent they will burn in hell for their sinful vote; but they can enjoy the fruits of the labor of godly and sound men and women between now and then as they pervert His Word and violate His Precepts. That friend told me of his struggle, and of the struggle of those who, like himself, loved the truth, and it was indeed a valiant example. They did what all preachers used to do—they cited the Scriptures and reasoned from them. That is what we all must do. Stand on the Book! If you do not have the *votes* and ultimately Truth cannot carry the day, then leave that congregation—it has ceased to be a faithful congregation—and start one of your own or go to a sound one. Simple enough. The sign on the property does not guarantee the soundness of the assembly.

Do not be afraid to speak up—truth is His and must be spoken. So what if the *money* is on the side of the false teachers; so what if the departing ones are bankers or lawyers or store owners—when they set themselves against the Truth they must be opposed. Have the courage to speak in defense of the truth. He will not forget your labors (cf. 1 Cor. 15:58). May God bless you as you study and obey His Word.

Tim Smith, Dothan, AL

“CHOOSE YOUR BATTLES”

Have you heard the above expression? It is often used to express the desire not to get involved in certain matters as they are not worth fighting about. There are times in the world when such is good advice for one can waste much time on matters that are inconsequential. However, there are things that are important enough for citizens to fight for. It is not my point in this article to discuss political matters in general, although there are things that citizens need to go engage themselves in “battle” for the benefit of the county, the state or the local community. Also, there are political battles that, as Christians, we must get involved with as they are of a moral nature such as the matter of abortion and homosexuality since such matters are contrary to God’s will.

In this article I want to concentrate on matters that pertain directly to the church of our Lord and the doctrine of Christ. Sadly, some Christians spend their time getting involved in “battles” over matters of no consequence such as the color of the song books, whether to remodel or move to a new location and a host of other matters. In matters of opinion, we need to “hold our powder” for wasting our efforts in these “battles” does not further the Lord’s cause.

However, there are preachers and elders who are advising brethren to “choose your battles” even when it comes to matters of the doctrine of Christ. Some will not “battle” for biblical baptism preferring to take any who would desire to place membership even if their baptism was such that they considered themselves saved before baptism and the baptism was not for the remission of sins. Some will not “battle” for the biblical doctrine regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage and allowing members to continue in unscriptural marriages rather than “rock the boat” and call upon those involved to repent. Some will not “battle” against change agents in the church.

Now we have those who will not “battle” in withdrawing fellowship from false teachers but would, instead, have fellowship with them even though they have taught against the error that is espoused. Those who continue to fight this “battle” are being characterized as being hateful and toxic to the brotherhood. Such is the opposite of the truth. The hatred is often seen in those who would rather fellowship the false teacher, for whatever reason, towards those who would uphold the teaching of such passages as Ephesians 5:11 and II John 9-11.

Brethren, as Christians we are soldiers in the Lord’s army and we are called to battle. In writing to the Ephesian brethren Paul exhorted them to take on the whole armor of God that they may be able to withstand the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:10-18). Such involves wielding the sword of the Spirit clearly indicating that we are involved in battle and not just “dressed up or a parade” Again, Jude exhorts; *“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”* (Jude 3).

Yes, we must “choose our battles” but we cannot afford to avoid the battles that will come because we are upholding the Word of God. If we avoid necessary “battles” for whatever reason, we will have to give an account of our words and actions at the judgment – *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”* (II Corinthians 5:10). At the end of life’s journey, may we be able to say, as did Paul: *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”* (II Timothy 4:10). Then, we can look forward, as did Paul, to that *“crown of righteousness”* (II Timothy 4:11).

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, and Rachel Fitzpatrick’s aunt (Eula Baker) who has cancer, Maomi Aaron’ sister who is having health problems, Myrtle Grimsley, Lanny Niver together with his daughter, and Tim Smith.

We will have a cookout on June 27 – Hamburgers, hot dogs and trimmings. Also on July 11 we will have a low country boil. Mark these dates on your calendar and plan to participate.

Before worship services started Sunday night Dawn Mason was baptized into Christ. She had previously been immersed in England but after further study realized that she had not understood what she was doing and thus wanted to be baptized to be sure of all things. Let us pray that she may grow in knowledge and in truth.

Pam Gossett was out Wednesday night. She had been away for some time with her daughter in the Atlanta area.

This bulletin is being produced early as Ken will be in Florida for the lectureship so news and notes will resume next week.

**KEEPING DISTRACTIONS
OUT OF THE WORSHIP**

As we come together on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7) to worship the Lord in spirit and Truth, it should be with the utmost reverence not just for the worship, but also for the respect due our Lord and His disciples. The worship service is to be conducted with a seriousness and devotion to the commands of God and revealing a focused mind that is free of distraction. The Lord’s Supper is to be taken as we remember Him (1 Cor. 11:26)—hardly a time to have/start conversations with people next to us.

This means we need to be cognizant of whether our actions distract those around us from the worship, and that of the service at large. It is difficult for brethren to concentrate on the Scriptures (so this includes morning and Wednesday night Bible class also) if we are yawning out loud, stretching, sipping water (or coffee), clicking our cell phones, or any activities other than attending to the spiritual matter at hand. Is there something about the Lord that does not deserve reverence and our complete attention?

“And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch one hour?” (Mark 14:37 - KJV)

We must be able to put the world out of our lives and minds for at least those moments that the Lord should be the primary focus. The study of the Lord’s Word (in worship or class) is not a trivial experience that is no more important than a phone call or thirst-quenching sip. Let this time be for the Lord, and Him only!

Johnny Oxendine, San Mateo, CA