

TITUS: THE MAN AND HIS WORK.

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PROFESSOR RAMSAY has called Titus "the most enigmatic figure in Early Church history," and this is unquestionably largely true, but yet there are sufficient notices of his life and work in Scripture to enable us to form a fairly complete portrait of this earnest and active disciple of primitive days. The process is rather like piecing together the scattered portions of an old glass window, by carefully fitting the coloured fragments we can get a general dea of what the window was like in its ancient glory.

It is surprising to find such a keen Christian was not mentioned in "The Acts." Many reasons have been suggested for this omission, but the most probable seems to be that he had been a test case regarding the circumcision of the Gentiles (Gal. ii. 3) and therefore his name might arouse angry feelings, though he was most likely among "the certain others" of Acts xv. 2. There can be no doubt such a trusted worker and tactful messenger must have been well known in "the household of faith." He was the spiritual child of St. Paul (Tit. i. 4) and comes into publicity in 2 Corinthians, in which epistle he is mentioned nine times, as one whose companionship Paul earnestly desired (2 Cor. vii. 6, 13), and whose cheerful presence delighted the Apostle's heart (2 Cor. vii. 6, 13). The Epistle to Titus was almost certainly written between Paul's first and second imprisonment, and we can imagine the sense of satisfaction and confidence that the Apostle would experience when he left the organization of the infant Church of Crete in such capable and trusty hands (Titus i. 5). "The care of all the churches" pressed heavily on the Apostle, specially as he realized the uncertainty of his own life and the precarious nature of his liberty, and it must have been an infinite relief to feel he could pass on this burden to such a successful organizer.

It is as we consider the work which we are told Titus did, that we begin to understand what manner of man he was. The character of persons is revealed more accurately by what they do, and how they do it, than by anything else. Faint endeavour in the cause of

Christ shows weak love and faith, while strenuous perseverance indicates a true love and a strong faith. Titus' life's work can be summed up under three heads: 1, Church Morality; 2, Church Finance; 3, Church Organization. And as we study his conduct in these respects the character of the man himself will stand revealed.

The first two are connected with the Church in Corinth; the last with the Church in Crete.

We may reasonably surmise that Titus was one of those people who rather enjoy having to tackle a difficult business: the troubles in the Corinthian Church awakened his interest, and he evidently felt that if wisely handled they might tend to the ultimate benefit of that important community. It has been generally assumed by scholars that Titus was one of the bearers of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and if so, we can understand he saw much that was lovable and attractive in them, so that he eagerly acceded to Paul's request that he would go and see what effect that solemn letter of warning and exhortation had had (2 Cor. vii. 6, 13), for Paul must have known by his intercourse with Titus how disinterested was his love, and how sincere his interest in the growth of the Corinthian Church in faith and purity (2 Cor. vii. 15). The result of that first Epistle was manifestly an immense and joyful surprise to Titus; it had effected more than he had dared to hope, and his glowing report had given Paul the most profound satisfaction (2 Cor. vii. 11, 13). The immorality of the heathen world was then so appalling and general (Eph. v. 3, 12) that it was small wonder that persons recently converted, young in faith and ill-instructed in doctrine should be found guilty of moral offences, but Titus being a Gentile and brought up amongst these habitual and popular corruptions, had proved a singularly wise and sympathetic counsellor, and doubtless Paul realized that much of the success of that first letter was due to the tactfulness of its deliverer, and that no one was better fitted to ascertain the condition of affairs at Corinth than Titus himself.

There is no Christian work more unpleasant, difficult, or perilous than that of dealing with the sins of the flesh: it requires immense self-control, great delicacy of feeling and speech, constant prayerfulness and heartfelt sympathy; so we can be sure Titus possessed all these qualifications in a marked degree. Learning how success-

fully Titus dealt with the question of Church Morality, workers for Christ faced by moral problems can take courage.

The second question which engaged the time and attention of Titus was *Church Finance*. Possibly during his visit to Jerusalem (Gal. ii. 1) he may have noted the poverty of the Jewish believers (for we can only picture the Early Church as poor) (Rom. xv. 26; John vii. 48; 1 Cor. i. 26; 1 Cor. xvi. 1-3), and it occurred to him, and the idea was heartily endorsed by Paul, what a wholesome effect on the spiritual relationship of Jews and Gentiles would result from a practical expression of brotherly sympathy from the Gentiles. Titus therefore became the founder of Foreign Mission Funds, for the matter mentioned in Acts vi. was purely domestic and concerned only the Church of Jerusalem, and that in Acts xi. 29 was probably Jews to Jews; but this collection at Corinth was the first attempt to organize help for those outside one's own community, and the experiment has had world-wide results. Paul honoured the originator by entrusting him with the completion of his scheme (2 Cor. viii. 6, 10, 11, 16, 17; ix. 5). It must have been an immense joy to Titus to find how cordially his plan had been adopted, and even if in his absence there had been a little slackness (2 Cor. viii. 11, 24; ix. 3-5), yet his return, full of zeal and love and courage, would soon put things right, and Paul was certain his pride in their generosity would be fully justified (2 Cor. ix. 12-14).

We may well in these days of continuous money collecting for various Christian objects, consider seriously the principles which Paul and Titus regarded as essential for true generosity and acceptable in the sight of God (Phil. iv. 18; Heb. xiii. 16). That Christian liberality is right we all readily admit, but we do not so readily examine the principles which ought to govern it. Titus was a spiritually-minded business man, and he shows (for we can be sure he and Paul arranged the whole matter between them) the correct basis of Church finance, and those principles which received Apostolic approval.

I. *Generous impulses originate with God* (2 Cor. viii. 1, 5). It is important we should test whether our generous impulses are emotional or spiritual, and if so, at all costs we must obey them. We should give not because man solicits, but God inspires.

II. *There must be readiness of will* (2 Cor. viii. 3, 12; ix. 7; cf. 1 Chron. xxix. 9; Rom. xii. 8). In the sight of God, the

spirit of the gift is more important than the gift itself. "Jesus sits down over against the Treasury" (Mark xii. 43, 44).

III. *The giving must be regular and proportionate* (1 Cor. xvi. 2 ; 2 Cor. viii.). Spasmodic giving shows emotion governs our liberality, not principle. Christians are bound to exercise self-control in their religious generosity. God expected specified sums in the Old Testament for various objects at regular times.

IV. *Action must follow resolution* (2 Cor. viii. 11). When we see our duty clearly, we must not allow the good intention to evaporate—delay is dangerous.

V. *The standard* (i.e. proportion) *fixed is to be a high one* (2 Cor. ix. 6 ; cf. Mal. iii. 10). The standard now is to be fixed by love, not law.

VI. *The real standard is Christ's love to us* (2 Cor. viii. 9 ; ix. 15 ; cf. 1 John iii. 16-18). This annihilates all pride over our generosity.

VII. *We must remember to give so that God is glorified* (2 Cor. ix. 12, 13 ; cf. Matt. v. 16). Self-glorification must be foreign to Christian liberality ; the sole object must be God-glorification.

Thus to this almost unknown disciple we owe this brilliant initiation of systematic almsgiving which laid the foundation of Church Finance according to the will of God.

III. Many years must have elapsed (probably ten) before Paul left Titus to exercise his remarkable talents of tactfulness and firmness in organizing the Church in Crete (Tit. i. 5), and in this paper we need not go into the details of his administration, but merely note that prolonged knowledge of his capability and character confirmed Paul's high estimate of him, and induced the Apostle with happy assurance to leave in his hands the complete organization of an infant and difficult Church, that he might evolve order from confusion.

IV. Having considered the work which Titus accomplished, as far as Scripture teaches us, we can now form a fair idea of the personality of the man, for a man's interests and occupations most surely reveal his character.

There are six features which stand out with great distinctness, and they are all worthy of our imitation. He was—

(1) *Earnest and active for God*. No one could doubt his sincerity ; life and lip told the same tale. His earnestness impressed the Apostle : he was the most eager of the two (2 Cor. viii. 16), and it

was no ordinary man whom Paul styled his "partner" (2 Cor. viii. 23), an expression only used again in Philemon 17. His energy and ceaseless activity testified to the intensity of his love.

(2) *Sympathetic and tactful.* The work he was engaged in both at Corinth and Crete in rebuking sin and stirring up to righteousness required no hard moralist, but one tenderly appreciative of the circumstances and feelings of others, and keenly alive to the power of the personal touch (2 Cor. vii. 7, 9, 11, 13). Paul must have had the greatest confidence in his judgment of character, when he left in his hands the choice of leaders for the Cretan Church.

(3) *Brave and willing to face difficulty and loneliness.* He went often on errands which must have involved danger from fanatical Jews or "false brethren" (Gal. ii. 2, 4). St. Paul's experience in 1 Corinthians iv. 10-13 must often have been his, and though he had companions (2 Cor. viii. 18-22), yet as the leader of the band he must have sorely missed the Apostle's advice and encouragement, which probably made him a deeply prayerful and thoughtful man.

(4) *Sound in faith, neither fanatical nor schismatical.* One who being very sure of his own beliefs could deal firmly yet gently with the errors which grew up on all sides in an ignorant and youthful Church (Tit. i. 9-11; ii. 1, 7, 8; iii. 9; cf. 2 Tim. ii. 23-25).

(5) *Contagious zeal.* No one can read of Titus' work as recorded in the Corinthian Epistle and the personal letter to himself, and not realize what an extraordinary enthusiasm for holiness and generosity he was able to inspire in others. Being on fire he set others on fire (2 Cor. viii. 1-6; ix. 2).

(6) *Rejoiced over good and deplored evil.* There was no palliation of sin with Titus: he sternly denounced it, but as sincerely rejoiced at the growth of personal holiness (2 Cor. vii. 6-7, 13, 15).

The man and his work are therefore so intertwined that we can only interpret the one by the other.

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