

# OpenTheo

## Titus: Chapter-by-Chapter Commentary

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**Alastair Roberts**

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## Transcript

The Book of Titus is one of Paul's three pastoral epistles, along with the books of 1st and 2nd Timothy. The dating of the Book of Titus, like the other pastoral epistles, is difficult. Perhaps it was written during Paul's third missionary journey, during his time in Ephesus.

The status of verse 5, that Paul left Titus on Crete, need not imply that Paul was actually on Crete himself. However, in this letter he does indicate a knowledge of the situation there. Crete doesn't appear in the Book of Acts until Acts chapter 27, when Paul and his companions go by Crete on their way to Rome.

Crete had a bad reputation, as a culture of sexual license, debauchery, lying, and gluttony. All things referenced later in this first chapter. As in the other pastoral epistles,

Paul has opponents very clearly in mind.

Titus' opponents on Crete seem to have had a Jewish-Christian background, and there may have also been some ascetic elements within the mix. Of Titus himself, we do not know a great deal. He is referenced in the Book of Galatians as a Gentile, Galatians chapter 2 verse 3. But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.

Titus is mentioned on several occasions in the Book of 2nd Corinthians, as an emissary of Paul to the Corinthians. In 2nd Corinthians chapter 8 verse 23, As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. Like the other pastoral epistles, the Pauline authorship of the Book of Titus has been disputed.

However, when these arguments against authenticity are examined more closely, they are not at all as strong as they might first appear. Paul begins the letter by describing himself and his ministry. Here he speaks of himself as a servant of God, language that he does not use elsewhere.

Speaking of himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul proceeds to articulate the purpose and the basis of his ministry. Its purpose is the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth. The faith of God's elect refers to the belief of the church.

God has chosen his people and brought them into participation in the life of his son, and he wants them to be built up in the faith. The intention is that they rise to their full maturity. One of Paul's fullest statements of what this means is found in Ephesians chapter 4 verses 11 to 16.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow, so that it builds itself up in love. The truth into which Paul is guiding the church is one that accords with godliness, or one that leads to godliness, most likely the former.

Godliness is the measure and a defining characteristic of the maturity into which Paul is guiding the people of God. This is the goal. The basis is the hope of eternal life.

Paul situates his message and his ministry within an eschatological frame. The hope of eternal life was promised before the ages began, and now in the fullness of time it has

been manifested through the preaching concerning Jesus Christ. Paul's own ministry is an expression of this.

He addresses Titus as his true child in a common faith. It is possible that this implies that it was through the ministry of the Apostle Paul that Titus was converted. However, the sonship of Titus, like the sonship of Timothy, might refer more to the way that he is functioning as an apostolic emissary for Paul.

Paul had left Titus on Crete. It is not clear that Paul himself had been on Crete, but he had commissioned Titus with his charge there. There already seemed to be several churches on the island of Crete, and Titus' duty was to put them in some sort of order.

Here, as we also see in 1 Timothy chapter 3, the task of the Apostle's representative seems to involve in large measure the establishment of a new structure of church government. There are clear parallels to observe between verses 6-9 and 1 Timothy chapter 3 verses 1-7. The saying is trustworthy.

If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive.

For if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. The task of Titus is that of appointing elders in every town.

This is most likely the task of establishing a leader of each town church, rather than lots of isolated household churches, each with their own elders. Paul wishes to establish an elder, or an overseer, within each town. This figure would presumably have been one of the leaders of the existing house churches.

It is imperative that candidates for such an office be of very good reputation, above any reproach. They are to be judged by their households. First of all, candidates for such a position have to be husbands of one wife.

Perhaps this is designed to exclude converted polygamists. However, it might just be a way of saying that the suitable candidate for such an office must be a one-woman man, a man who is absolutely faithful to his wife. He needs to have a family whose behaviour conforms with the gospel.

In a deeply perverse and pagan society like Crete's, his household needs to be a model household. If his children are given to the ways of the surrounding culture, he will not be

able to give the sort of example that is needed. Likewise, if his children do not respect his authority, if they are insubordinate, his ability to lead the church will be compromised, and it may also be an indication of a failure on his part, that he is the sort of head of a household who provokes his children to anger, or perhaps that he is too weak or lacks sufficient moral character to set a household in order.

The overseer is called to act as God's steward in his household. While teaching is an essential part of this role, the task of the overseer does not narrowly focus upon that act of teaching. It is better thought of as the task of a guardian or steward.

He needs to manage and oversee the running of the household of God. To fulfil such a role, besides being above reproach, he needs to be a humble man who is able to exercise control over his passions, his temper, and his appetites. He must not be given to anger or given to much wine, with which violence can often come.

He must not be a greedy man, a man who is driven by the love of money. Rather, he must be characterised by a series of positive traits. Hospitality is mentioned first.

Hospitality was absolutely essential to the early church's life. Wealthy patrons and hosts would allow the church to meet in their homes. They would support missionaries.

They would provide a place for missionaries and other Christian ministers who were passing through to stay. The overseer also needs to be someone who loves what is good. He needs to be self-controlled, someone who acts with restraint and a well-ordered will, a man of prudence, sobriety, and moderation.

He must be morally upright, holy, given to the things of God, and disciplined, someone who has a reign upon his appetites and lusts. From these aspects of the fitting overseer's character, Paul turns to the duties of the overseer. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught.

He needs to be a man of backbone, resolve, of commitment, and conviction. The overseer needs to function as the immune system and the backbone of the church in which he serves. If the overseer is weak and compromising, everyone else is weakened by him.

If he, however, holds firm, he makes it so much easier for everyone else to do so. His holding firm in the trustworthy word as taught is expressed both in clear and accurate teaching of the truth to those under his instruction, and also in his ability forthrightly and effectively to rebuke those who go against it. Such traits of the overseer were clearly needed on the island of Crete.

On Crete there seemed to have been many people, particularly among the Jews professing Christ, who were not submitting to the church or the proper teaching, and were spreading empty and lying doctrines. Strong overseers in each town would be far

better situated to silence the false teachers. Their practice seems to have been to subvert the teaching of churches on the household level.

Perhaps we have an indication of such teachers in 2 Timothy 3, verses 6 and 7. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning, and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. The false teachers were seemingly mercenaries, using their false teaching as a means of getting wealth for themselves. In verse 12, Paul makes a surprising statement.

One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. This statement may be a quotation from Epimenides in the 5th or 6th century BC, the argument of Clement and Jerome. Alternatively, it may be Callimachus from the 3rd century BC, in his Hymn to Zeus.

Crete had a long lasting reputation as a society of debauchery, of ungoverned appetites, and of lies and religious falsehoods. In such a wicked society, Christians were supposed to stand out, but Paul here characterises the false teachers as people acting entirely in terms of the regional stereotype. Several commentators note the liar's paradox in verse 13.

A Cretan's statement that Cretans are always liars is declared to be true. Paul, however, does not seem to be playing upon that paradox here. His point is rather to highlight the fact that this Cretan stereotype is not just one given by outsiders.

Honoured figures within Cretan society itself have confirmed and validated it. The false teachers here seem to be similar to those described in 1 Timothy 1 verses 3 and 4. Paul wrote in that passage, As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus, so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations, rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. It is likely that these Jewish teachers were working with certain Jewish deuterocanonical texts and various pseudepigraphical literature built upon imaginations and speculations concerning ancient figures.

Such fanciful, fictional and speculative literature was taking the place of the clear word of God. Along with this, certain ascetic practices seem to have been adopted. Paul's teaching here conforms with what he says in Romans chapter 14 verse 20.

Do not for the sake of food destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. It is not food that makes someone clean or unclean.

Cleanness or uncleanness comes ultimately from the heart. Jesus makes the same point

in Luke chapter 11 verses 39 to 41. And the Lord said to him, Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.

You fools! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you. And then also in Mark chapter 7 verses 18 to 23. And he said to them, Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach and is expelled? Thus he declared all foods clean.

And he said, What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.

Among other things, the false teachers in Crete seem to have been trying to manage the uncleanness of the heart merely by the regulation of external objects, treating those foods as if they were the source of uncleanness, rather than the sinful heart itself. Yet Paul here describes them as detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work. Despite this extreme condemnation though, Paul presents Titus' duty as that of rebuking them, with the hope that they might be sound in the faith.

For all of his harsh words, Paul has not given up on the possibility of these false teachers being turned around. A question to consider, how might Paul's teaching concerning the overseer here and elsewhere help us in our understanding of the proper role and the suitable persons for the office of the pastor? In the opening verses of Titus chapter 2, Paul speaks to the life of the household. In his teaching in verses 1-10, he seems to be especially concerned to encourage a respectable and God-honouring form of life among the various groups within the church, older and younger men and women, and bond-servants.

Several scholars have remarked upon the influence of the phenomenon of the new Roman woman, with some wealthier women abandoning old standards of sexual propriety, neglecting the life and management of the household, and trying to be more vocal in the traditionally defined public sphere. Toleration of such behaviour in the church, and the impression that the message of emancipation in the gospel justified it, would have brought the gospel into disrepute for many in the society. Many commentators have speculated that Paul had such women partly in view in his teaching in 1 Timothy chapter 2 verses 9-15.

Although this sort of background has likely been overstated by many, it is not unlikely that such women were part of what Paul had in his sights in verses 3-5. Paul is concerned that the Christian message not be ill-spoken of, and even more, that those who profess it adorn it by their behaviour. The material of the first ten verses of this

chapter is similar to some of the household codes that we encounter elsewhere in the Pauline corpus, in Ephesians chapter 5 and 6, Colossians chapter 3 and 4, and also in 1 Peter chapter 2 and 3. The opening verses of chapter 2 suggest that there is a close connection in Paul's mind between Christian doctrine and appropriate ethics, even though they are not simply identified.

One of the more distinctive features of Paul's teaching here, in contrast to what we find elsewhere in his work, is his attention to the intersection of age and gender. He does not directly address wives and husbands here, but older men and older women, younger women and younger men. While the marital context is referred to and is taken for granted at many points, the teaching thus organised leads more to the development of individuals into mature exemplars of their sex.

The older men are addressed first. These are not the same persons as elders, although the elders would have been older men. The older men are supposed to be sober-minded.

Perhaps this is a statement about their being temperate, or perhaps it's a reference to their not drinking too much. They're supposed to be dignified, serious, to have an appropriate sense of gravitas. They need to command respect and honour.

Older men should be accorded honour and authority, but they also need to command it by their display of dignity. They need to be self-controlled, prudent, restrained, moderate. People who have a reign upon their appetites, their passions and their moods.

People whose wills are guided by their reason. They must be sound in faith, in love and in steadfastness. These three things are presumably related to the theological virtues of faith, love and hope.

Steadfastness corresponding with hope. Soundness in faith would be belief in the gospel and in God that does not waver under trial. Soundness in love would be seen in the commitment of the older men in their service of God and his people.

Their steadfastness would be seen in their hope-fuelled endurance under trial. Paul next turns to the older women. They need to be reverent in behaviour.

They need to show a godly integrity and holiness of life. They need to avoid slander, gossip, loose talk and excesses of wine. And Paul expects such older women to play a critical role in educating younger women in godly conduct, ensuring thereby that the household of faith is well ordered.

The older women's teaching of the younger women mostly concerns their proper behaviour in the context of their households, their practical and loving commitment to their husbands and children. Paul's language here concerning the teaching might have more of a corrective shading in its meaning. The older women are to moderate or maybe even, as Philip Towner argues, to call the younger women to return to their senses.

The older women's instruction of the younger women is with the end of teaching them to be self-controlled, the same term that was used earlier of the older men. However, like many such virtue terms, it is coloured by gender. With regard to the virtues, men and women can be like two different kinds of instruments playing the same note.

While the note may be the same, it will have a very different timbre. As he does here, Paul also encourages self-control for women in 1 Timothy 2, verses 9-10. Likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness, with good works.

The younger women are also instructed to be pure, likely meant in a sexual sense here. They are expected to be good managers of their households. We should be aware of reading the term translated by the ESV as working at home in terms of modern debates about working or stay-at-home mothers.

The ancient household was a realm of production, education, welfare, society and all sorts of other such matters. The young woman managing her household would be deeply embedded and invested in active labour and the society, and wouldn't be anywhere near as likely to be facing the home-workplace dilemma that many contemporary women do, where either choice may restrict her capacity for rising to her full stature. The alternative to working at home may not be so much working in the workplace as being a busybody, a gadabout, a gossip and a lazy woman.

That said, the location of the work is not unimportant. At the heart of marriage is the task of building a world and transforming the world together with one's spouse. Marriage is not just about enjoying a private domestic retreat with one's spouse, but about forming a realm of common labour out into the world.

A marriage where no such labour is occurring, a home that is reduced to mere shared leisure, is a marriage that is missing an important dimension. Rather than merely being independent careerists, husband and wife ideally share their home as a focus and or site of their labour. They may not be working alongside each other, but their household is their common project.

Men and women may be distinguished in their vocations in Paul's understanding, but the household is supposed to be a true commonwealth, a sharing of the end, the focus and the fruit of their respective labours. The household also stands in contradistinction to the public arena. As in 1 Timothy chapter 2, Paul seems to have some concerns about the way that women were intruding upon the functioning of that realm, in ways that compromised its operations, seeking authority over men in a manner that disrupted the actual operation of healthy authority.

Paul doesn't address such issues so directly here, but they are likely partly in view in the



notion of the submission that women are supposed to show to their own husbands. When modern Christians speak of submission, they tend to situate it primarily in the direct face-to-face relationship of the husband and the wife. However, the headship of the man was primarily directed out into the world, and the submission of the wife would cheaply have been to that, in the shoulder-to-shoulder relationship of their common labours.

Submission in the face-to-face relationship may have been rather secondary. A wife who honours her husband greatly strengthens him, and if he is a good husband, the strength and standing that he enjoys will be used to build her up. The wife's submission is less a matter of passive and reluctant capitulation to him, than willing and active collaboration with, counselling of, and honouring of her husband as he sets the lead.

She should not be engaged with a tug-of-war against him, nor just be his doormat. Rather, they should both be throwing their united yet differing energies into their common task, from which they both end up stronger for being one flesh. Paul hopes that by correcting the younger women, the older women will protect the word of God from being ill-spoken of.

Titus, for his part, is now instructed to teach the younger men in a manner comparable to the way that the older women teach the younger women. He must present himself as a model, a lived example of the behaviour that he is encouraging. In addition, he must provide sound teaching, marked by integrity, truth, and seriousness.

The young men need to be self-controlled, restrained, prudent, and temperate. Once again, Paul is concerned that those bad-mouthing Christians in Crete be silenced, not being able to fault the behaviour of the members of the church. One of the things that we might observe here is the way that for Paul teaching in the church on certain matters needed to be gendered and generational.

It matters who teaches certain lessons. While part of Paul's concern here is doubtless propriety, he likely has other considerations in mind too. If Titus were primarily the one charged to teach the lessons to the younger women, then the teaching might be experienced primarily as something designed to get them into line.

However, if the teaching is given to them by godly older women, women who are honoured and respected and reverent in their behaviour, the younger women will more readily perceive the teaching as something designed to build them up, to strengthen them, to enable them to become like those older women, not just as something designed to get them in line. There are many occasions where good teaching is hamstrung by the fact that it is not being taught by the right person. A teacher who can serve as an exemplar of that which they are teaching in a way that makes it desirable to the person being taught is always going to be a lot more effective.

Even if Titus were able to teach the young women the content of their appropriate

behaviour accurately, under typical circumstances he could never be as effective as a godly older woman who could also exemplify it. Paul concludes his instructions here by addressing bond servants. As in 1 Timothy, his instructions here are limited to bond servants, he does not address masters at this point.

Such servants are to act not just as man-pleasers, but as those who are looking towards a greater master, who are concerned to please Christ and by their behaviour to adorn his doctrine, behaving in such a way that stands out from everyone else and draws attention to the beauty of the teaching of Christ. In verses 11-14 we arrive at what might be thought of as the climax of the letter. In this condensed theological statement, Paul expresses the theological foundation for the transformation of life that he is encouraging.

It arises from the epiphany of God's grace and history. In the work of Christ, this has brought salvation for all people. As Paul makes clear at the beginning of 1 Timothy chapter 2, the gospel is something that comes with the message of salvation to every class of persons.

Already in this chapter he has spoken about the way that salvation can be lived out by older and younger men and women and also by those in slavery. This is not a salvation exclusive to the rich or to a particular people like the Jews, it is for everyone. And this epiphany of God's grace and history results in a transformation of behaviour.

It leads to a rejection of old ways of life that characterise the age that has passed, ungodliness and worldly passions. The alternative to these are self-controlled, upright and godly lives. Such lives develop out of the epiphany of God's grace in Christ in the fullness of time but are also fuelled by anticipation, by the blessed, God-given hope of the appearance of the glory of our great God and saviour, Jesus Christ.

That future horizon leads to dramatic renovation of life. Scholars have debated the end of verse 13. Is Jesus Christ to be identified with our great God and saviour, which would be a most remarkable declaration of the deity of Christ, or is there some other way of understanding the expression? Tanner for instance suggests that we should take Jesus Christ as being in apposition with the glory of our great God and saviour.

Jesus Christ is the glory of God. There is still a powerful theological statement being made here, but it may be more subtle in character than others believe it to be. Verse 14 is redolent with all sorts of memories and echoes from the Old Testament.

Christ gave himself to redeem us. This might remind us of the way that Jesus is described as a ransom for all in 1 Timothy chapter 2. He has redeemed us from the realm of lawlessness and wickedness, and he has done so to purify us for himself as a new people. We are supposed to be his special possession.

We might think here of the Lord's statement to the children of Israel at Sinai. We might also think of statements like Ephesians chapter 5 verses 25 to 27. God's intention to create a holy chosen people for himself is in keeping with the Old Testament promise that he will be their God and they will be his people.

The redemption from lawlessness and the purification also draw our mind back to the promises of the New Covenant. God will purify his people by sprinkling clean water upon them. He will forgive their sins and their lawless deeds and he will place a new heart within them, writing his law upon it.

All of this is coming to pass through the work of Christ. And the goal of all of this is to have a special godly people who are devoted to good works. The moral transformation of life that Paul is encouraging here is not a secondary thought.

It's been the whole point all the way along. This is what God's action of grace was always aiming at. Lives that have not been revolutionized by such grace to display holiness and godliness are still born in the faith.

Paul concludes the chapter by charging Titus to teach effectively and with authority. He must boldly exhort and encourage people in these matters, stirring them up to this expression of faith and good works. He must rebuke false teachers, troublemakers, and those who are not abiding by the teaching.

And he must do all of this with authority, not allowing anyone to disregard him, in such a manner he would fulfil the purpose for which Paul left him in Crete. A question to consider, what can we learn from the conclusion of this chapter concerning the proper relationship between grace and good works? From the Apostle Paul's teaching concerning appropriate behaviour in the household in chapter 2 of Titus, in chapter 3 he moves to the more general behaviour of the church and society. This presumably is teaching that they had received before, so Titus' duty is to remind them of it, rather than that of laying a foundation.

Once again, Paul's teaching here might indicate a particular concern for the public image of Christians in the society of Crete. In certain respects, Christians need to stand out, yet in other respects they need to fit in, to be people who are not troublemakers, rabble-rousers, discontents, or revolutionaries, but upstanding members of the society. They are to be submissive to rulers and authority, to obey those things laid upon them by the government, but also to be a public-spirited people.

We might here recall the Prophet Jeremiah's instruction to the captives in Babylon, in Jeremiah chapter 29 verse 7, But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. Similar teaching is elsewhere in Paul's writings, for instance in Romans chapter 13 verses 1-7, and then elsewhere in the New Testament, in places like 1 Peter chapter 2 verses

13-17. Be subject, for the Lord's sake, to every human institution, whether it be to the Emperor's Supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil, and to praise those who do good, for this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honour everyone, love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the Emperor. As a people, Christians need to avoid slander.

Perhaps Paul has in mind the bad-mouthing of authorities that people can so often engage in. Appropriate Christian submission to rulers and authorities requires, among other things, according them appropriate respect in the way that we speak about them. Christians are to be a peaceful people, avoiding quarrels among themselves, or getting entangled in those of the wider society.

Here we might also think back to the way that Paul has previously described the opponents of Titus and Crete, contentious people who are marked out by their quarrelling. Rather than such characteristics, which ultimately flow from pride, Christians should be distinguished by being conciliatory, by being considerate, forbearing, tractable, and then also humble and meek. Such humility and meekness will extinguish many conflicts before they even get started.

These virtues need to be exhibited in all of the Christian's interactions, both within the church and with people outside of it. The grounds for this sort of behaviour are found in the work of God, a work of God by which we were delivered from a former manner of life and transformed so that we might live differently thereafter. Verses 3-7 provide the basis for the statement of verses 1-2.

It is a great before and after statement, beginning with a characterisation of our former manner of life and then speaking of the means by which we were delivered from it. It rules out salvation by works of righteousness, before describing the means by which God saved us, and then the end for which he did so. Verses 4-7 are all a single sentence in the Greek.

As Philip Towner notes, Paul's characterisation of Christian's former manner of life could be clustered under three headings, ignorance, which includes foolishness, disobedience, and being led astray, followed by bondage, being slaves to various passions and pleasures, and then finally, hatred, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others, and hating one another. Once again, we might see something of the shadow of the opponents in Crete here. Deliverance from such a manner of life would require a number of different things.

It would necessitate revelation and knowledge to address the ignorance. It would require redemption and deliverance to address the bondage. And it would require a new

principle of love to address the hatred.

That need for a new principle of love is perhaps where the accent of Paul's teaching is most strongly placed. The sort of society that arises when people practice that former way of life is one of deep antagonisms and tensions between people. People are always trying to get advantage over others, resenting others, being bitter towards them, or malicious and vindictive in their intentions.

Mutual hatred is the operating principle for life in this manner of society. One of the things that Paul diagnoses in the false teachers that he challenges is that behind their teaching, one needs to recognise these dynamics at work. They are not merely concerned about ideas and truths.

Scratch the surface and you will see that they are being driven by these dynamics of Salvation for Paul is an epiphany. In verse 4, But when the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Saviour appeared, this is something that we have seen in the preceding chapter, in verses 11 and 12, For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age. The language of verse 4, goodness and lovingkindness, is the sort of language that in Paul's day would have been particularly associated with a benevolent ruler.

This benevolence of God the Saviour is something that leads to our salvation. Paul explicitly excludes anything in us that might have merited God's action of salvation. God's salvation is purely of his own mercy.

Works, whether works of the Jewish law or more general ethical behaviour that might be practised by certain Gentiles, is ruled out as a basis for God's salvation. Elsewhere in the Pauline corpus, his focus is generally particularly upon the Jewish law. Here, and on a few other occasions, it becomes clear that Paul's point is more generally applicable.

For instance, in 2 Timothy 1, verse 9, And then in Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8 and 9, For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Some have seen in verses 4-7 a possible baptismal hymn. Raymond Collins, for instance, argues that if we remove some of the clauses concerning justification, which Paul has added to the hymn to unpack his point, we will see that it has a natural poetic form in the Greek.

Salvation here occurs by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. This expression could be read in various ways. It could be read like, through the washing of regeneration and through the renewal of the Holy Spirit, or it could be read more with the sense, through the washing that brings about regeneration and renewal, given by the Holy Spirit.

In the first case, there are two distinct operations. In the second, there is a single washing by the Holy Spirit, which involves both renewal and regeneration. The washing of regeneration could refer to the act of washing, or it could refer to the place of washing, the laver, for instance.

We encounter such language elsewhere in the New Testament, for instance in Ephesians chapter 5, verses 25-27, with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Also in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 11, and such were some of you, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. Within the wording of such verses, we might hear Old Testament prophetic statements concerning the new covenant being echoed.

For instance, Ezekiel chapter 36, verses 25-27, I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you, and I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you, and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh, and I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. Such a statement clearly brings together images of water, the Spirit and renewal. A similar conjunction of imagery can be found in Jesus' teaching to Nicodemus in John chapter 3, where we also have the element of rebirth present, you must be born again by water and the Spirit.

Elsewhere in the New Testament we might think about places like 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 17, for themes of renewal, therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold the new has come. Or in Romans chapter 6, verse 4, we were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. The redemptive historical underpinnings of all of this might be seen on the day of Pentecost, as Christ baptises his church by the Holy Spirit.

How then should we understand the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit? Some, like Towner, have seen this as a metaphorical reference to the work of the Holy Spirit. However, with perhaps the majority of commentators, I believe that this needs to be related to baptism. This of course is not to pit baptism against the Holy Spirit, rather baptism is a means by which we enter into full enjoyment of the life of the Holy Spirit.

It is in baptism that God confirms and seals to us what he has already granted to us in quickening us to newness of life. In this respect, baptism might be compared to a coronation. Although the king's accession to the throne might occur upon the death of the former monarch, the coronation is the public validation of his sovereignty, his entrance into the full enjoyment of his new office, and the open and public recognition of

his new status.

The person who has been converted to belief in Christ, but has never been baptized, is fundamentally stunted in his Christian growth. He might be compared to the child that has been adopted into a new family, but does not get around to taking on his adoptive family's name, nor is he entering into full fellowship with his new siblings, or eating at the family meal table. In the New Testament, baptism is not so much a work that we do, but rather an act of God's grace and assurance to enroll and confirm us in the fellowship of his son, marking out our very bodies by a sign of Christ's death and burial, so that we might be assured of sharing with him in resurrection life.

Baptism brings us into a full participation in the life of the community formed at Pentecost. As Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 12, verse 13, for in one spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one spirit. Seen this way, baptism, which Paul presumes as being received and lived out by faith, is the definitive event that can stand for the whole realities of regeneration and renewal that are brought about by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

It is in baptism that the faith of the convert enters fully into its rebirth-rite. As such, baptism can be a powerful and effective symbol of the entire reality of God's grace that has led us to that point. The gift of the Spirit is received through the work of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

It is through Christ's ascension that the Spirit can be poured out at Pentecost. Having received this wonderful new standing before God purely on the basis of his grace, God's purpose can be achieved. We are now heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

This great work of God's goodness in salvation is the basis for our transformed manner of life. For Paul, it is imperative that people live this out. This transformed manner of life is the purpose of it all, to the extent that a transformed manner of life is not being lived out, salvation is not being experienced.

In verses 9 to 11, Paul returns to the question of the false teachers in Crete, instructing Titus more directly in how to deal with them. He must beware of engaging with false teachers on their own terms. Dubious speculations, arcane knowledge and esoteric teachings are dangerous.

As the false teachers in Crete are handling them, they draw people's attention away from the clarity of the gospel and the faith that corresponds to it. The false teaching Paul describes here is similar to that described in 1 Timothy 1, 3 and 4. As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations, rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. Titus needs to be wise to the false teachers, recognising the deeper moral wrath

that often lies behind the facade of the false teaching.

There are persons who by their very nature stir up divisions, because they are arrogant, sinful and warped, as he goes on to describe them. Such persons need to be dealt with in a manner akin to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18, verses 15-17. If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone.

If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Paul's instruction to Titus here seems to follow the same pattern, those who reject the earlier warnings need to be excommunicated. Paul concludes by giving instructions to Titus concerning future plans. Paul will either send Artemus or Tychicus to him, and at that point Titus needs to come to join him in Nicopolis, a city on the west coast of Greece.

Xenus and Apollos will also accompany one of these men, and they need to be helped on their way, provided with hospitality while in Crete, and given the resources for the next leg of their journey. The practice of hospitality in the early church was one of the reasons why they had such an effective network of churches. The frequent movement of ministers and missionaries around this network also greatly strengthened the witness of the gospel.

The church that it produced was far more tightly knit. Before he signs off, Paul gives Titus yet one more reminder that the Cretans and Christians more generally need to devote themselves to good works. Here, however, he probably has the more immediate need of the travelling ministers in view.

He closes the epistle as he usually does, with final greetings. Such exchanges of greetings, not just between Paul and Titus, but between their respective communities, was another way in which stronger bonds within the early church could be forged. A question to consider.

The form of life that the church is to practice is founded upon God's own action, which reveals in turn his character. After experiencing the salvation of God, God's action and character becomes the basis of our own action. How does God's action and character revealed in his salvation help to explain the mode of life that is practiced within the church?