

Exhortations to Timothy and Titus

"Let no man despise thy youth: but be an example of the believers, in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity"—1 Tim. 4:12

IN this personal letter from the elderly apostle Paul to the younger brother Titus, and preserved by the grace and providence of God, we have an excellent example of letter writing, and a wealth of instruction for both individual and ecclesial use. Paul directs Titus, and also Timothy in his 2 letters, to—

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

And also, how to conduct themselves in the House of God—

"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly, but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the House of God, which is the ecclesia of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth" (1 Tim. 3:14-15).

Let us just briefly consider the qualifications of Paul, which enabled him to write with such authority. He was educated in the spiritual things of the Law of Moses and the Prophets. He was taught by Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, who was a member of the Sanhedrin. But Paul was greater than his teachers in that he was expressly chosen by God to serve Him. He was directly instructed by Christ, as he tells the Galatians—1:12, and was sent by Jesus to preach the Gospel, and to teach the believers how to conduct themselves in Christ's service. Jesus said to Ananias—

"He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my Name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

He possessed the Holy Spirit and was inspired to write the epistles in our Scriptures. Ananias said to him—

"Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou earnest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17).

His writings therefore are fully sanctioned by God, and carry a weight which must be accepted, far beyond anything written or spoken in this age, or for many centuries previous to our day.

He speaks of both Titus and Timothy as his sons, no doubt converted through his teaching; and therefore, creating a bond between them, as between father and son, a mutual relation of love and trust.

Modern civilization has to a great extent destroyed the unity that should exist between parents and children, old and young; and has developed competition where cooperation should be. There often exists an age barrier, creating misunderstanding, distrust and rebellion.

These conditions should not exist in the Body, the ecclesia, or the home; but due to human nature on all sides, they do exist to some degree. We, the elderly, should set the pattern, and show respect and trust for all age groups of either sex. And we should teach our children to not only respect and consider the younger members, but also the elderly and the very old; and to promote trust among all. By doing this and encouraging conversation and discussion and participation between young and old, a deeper understanding is developed, and the advantages possessed by each group are shared by all.

By no means is this effort the responsibility of the parents or the elderly only. The young must try to adapt themselves to a condition where the older ones, for the time being, have the control in both natural and spiritual things. You the young must do your part to foster that confidence and love that make for cooperation and fellowship.

In the world, the fashions and so-called 'progress' of the worldly generations strain every effort to make the old obsolete and antiquated, so as to promote materialistic advantage, to glorify the 'new,' to promote sales. The schools influence you to think differently from the older generation under the guise of 'thinking for yourselves,' but this usually however means following their line of reasoning.

If either age group gives in to the natural tendencies of the flesh, the inevitable results. We see this unwholesome age segregation in other groups around us, undermining unity and fellowship. The old of today were yesterday's youths; and the young of today will be the parents, the guides, and the old of tomorrow. How beautiful when the transition is smooth, and values are preserved, and all pull together in mutual respect and love! We need the strength and vitality of the young, and we need to direct this in the way of righteousness, fitting them to eventually fully take over, and try to do perhaps better than we have done.

However, the young must remember that experience is a great teacher; and some of the things that we believe in youth to be the best way, the right way, and even the scriptural way, have been tried, have been observed in the experience of others, and have been found to bear fruit which results in a weakening of the Body of Christ in its present day form. The emphasis must be placed on doing all to the glory of God, which will result in the saving of man.

The young are certainly not to blame for this, except insofar as they follow those who advocate the modern way, the broad way, the way of the world.

The Christian communities of Paul's day had come out from their former positions in the world (which were perhaps no worse than our surroundings in God's sight), and like infants learning to walk and talk and control themselves, needed help and guidance and advice. Paul could do only so much, so he appointed men like Titus and Timothy as 'bishops,' or overseers. They, though young, had proved themselves worthy of this trust. Paul reminds Timothy why he had left him at Ephesus—

"As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith, so do.

"Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling, desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm."

From these instructions we can learn the problems that faced these young brethren: the problems to be guarded against in ecclesial life, the motives to be borne in mind in all we do, and the ends to be striven for. And we can take courage as we face our problems. He further says to Timothy, as to dealing with error—

"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare: holding faith and a good conscience.

"Which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck; of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have *delivered unto Satan*, that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1 Tim. 1:18-20).

There are many serious responsibilities and duties in the Truth: they must be faced with courage and humility and firmness. He exhorts his beloved son in the Faith in words we should ever keep before us. We can never read them often enough, or dwell too deeply on them—

"These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth; but *be thou an example* of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

"Till I come, *give attendance to reading*, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

"Meditate upon these things; *give thyself WHOLLY to them*, that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine: continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee" (1 Tim.4: 11-16).

Similarly, Paul advised Titus why he left him in Crete—

"To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: grace, mercy and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain (appoint) elders in every city, as I had appointed thee" (1:4-5).

Beginning ch. 2, he said to him—

"But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" (v. 1).

It may be wondered why Titus needed to be told this. It needed to be put on record. It needs to be continually emphasized. It is the secret of ecclesial wellbeing, and the tendency of the flesh is all the other way. We all need to be reminded to constantly labour to keep things sound and solid and simple, building safely on our established, tried foundation, and avoiding unsettling speculation. Novelty is not wisdom, but the very reverse.

"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee"
(Tit. 2:15).

There was a great work to be done among believers. There is a great work to be done today. Paul indicates there were 'things lacking.' And elders were needed in the ecclesias; and he commissioned Titus and also Timothy to appoint suitable men. They had a special work to do and needed special qualifications (though truly *all* should be striving to the best of their ability to develop these qualifications).

There is also great need today for qualified elders to be guides and *examples* to the flock, and custodians of the Truth placed in their care. In those days they had the Holy Spirit; but *we* have the Spirit-Word available for use in Christ's service—but not for our own present exaltation, or for the oppression of others.

Paul tells both Titus and Timothy that a 'bishop must be blameless.' '*Blameless*'! —yet we realize:

"There is no man that sinneth not"(1 Kings 8:46).

David says (Psa. 130:3-4)—

"If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared."

A forgiven man is without fault, and therefore 'blameless,' as long as he faithfully keeps his garment white by constant washing in the blood of the Lamb thru repentance & prayer. Paul explains this further (Titus 1:7):

"*Not self-willed*"—not stubborn or headstrong or pleasing self.

"*Not soon angry*"—but patient, longsuffering, gentle, meek.

"*Not given to wine*"— liquor of any kind is dangerous & should be avoided.

"*No striker*"—not belligerent & rough: 'He that taketh the sword shall perish with the sword'—a symbol of revenge and vindication.

"*Not given to filthy lucre*" —present wealth must not be our aim or desire, must not influence us at all: it's fleshly, therefore unclean.

One more requirement from v. 6 (well expressed in 1 Tim. 3:4-5)—

"One that *ruleth well his own house*, having his children in subjection with all gravity: for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Ecclesia of God?"

It is very easy to see how others fail in this respect and be totally blind to where *we* fail. Uncontrolled and spoiled children suffer all throughout their lives, from their parents' neglect. They become a rod to their parents' backs, and a nuisance in the meetings, and to their friends, and to everybody in general, and— saddest of all—most likely will not be fit for the Kingdom of God. Therefore, how unfit would such a parent be to fill such an office.

These qualifications are as necessary today as in Paul's day. If we desire the office of arranging brother, finance brother, or recording brother, or even doorkeeper or librarian, we (Paul says) 'desire a good work,' and really should be appointed to such only if we measure up to these Spirit-inspired rules.

Paul places responsibility also on the wife of a deacon or bishop—

"Their wives must be grave, not slanderers, sober, *faithful in all things*" (1 Tim.3: 11).

As we get older, it is hard to change what we naturally are. But we have been reading these instructions for many years. It's time *we* have moulded our characters into this mould.

For those of *you* who hope to obey God in this life, and are more or less just beginning, *now* is the time to prepare yourselves for service. There is always work to be done for Christ in the home, in the ecclesia, and in the world; and especially among brethren and sisters and their families. No one should ever bewail the fact that they have 'nothing to do,' or wish to not participate in this great work of preparing for salvation. Titus 2:6-8 can be a pattern of good works—

"Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded: in all things showing thyself *a pattern of good works*: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."

While you are young, *get knowledge and understanding and wisdom*. You will never attain to these following the world's way: comics, fiction, rock-and-roll music, flesh-pleasing plays on radio or television. We shall never become useful workers for God if we think the daily readings are all the study we require, and the rest of our time is for fleshly recreation. Paul makes this very clear—

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men; teaching us that, *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts*, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world;

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself *a peculiar people, ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS*" (Titus 2:11-14).

Youth is a golden time for learning—and learning the *glorious, eternal, worthwhile* things that reach beyond the grave—while the mind is fresh and alert and uncluttered with the cares of age, and physical powers are at their peak (Eccl. 12: 1)—

"Remember thy Creator in the days of youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

Finally, let us consider Phil. 2:5-8, turning our minds to the uplifting, comforting, inspiring example of our glorious Elder Brother, cut off in the midst of his days, while still a young man, but now alive in tireless youthful vigour for evermore—

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Here is our Great Example: let us all—young and old—unite together in love to follow in his footsteps.

—A.S.J.

