PAUL'S LETTER TO TITUS: DEFINING THE "GOOD" LEADER

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ABSTRACT

The first chapter of Paul's pastoral letter to Titus will be used as a basis to define what is good and what it means to be a good leader. Paul, as both a believer and Roman citizen, was socially and culturally at odds with the people on the island of Crete where Titus was called to build the Church. He challenges Titus to choose Church leaders that had high values and ethical standards and were above reproach. Through social and cultural texture analysis, Titus 1 will be analyzed to glean the values and ethical standards that Paul implores Titus to follow and to use as a basis for identifying and organizing around good Church leaders.

Keywords: Values, Virtues, Ethics, Character, Leadership, Cretans, Romans, Church

INTRODUCTION

Paul's letter to both Timothy and Titus are unique because "they are addressed not to churches but to Paul's coworkers and delegates" (DeSilva, 2004, p. 733). Titus was challenged to start a mission and congregation on Crete (DeSilva, p. 735). Thus, Paul wrote Titus a "Pastoral Epistle" to teach and instruct him how to select and develop leadership for a congregation (DeSilva, p. 733). The following analyzes, using social and cultural texture, Paul's pastoral call to Titus, what it means to be both good and a good leader in a fallen world, the expectations placed on early church leaders, and how leaders can apply it today.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Scriptural analysis through socio-rhetorical criticism or interpretation gives a deeper meaning to a text and "challenges interpreters to explore text in a systematic, plentiful environment of interpretation and dialogue" (Robbins, 1996, p. 4). Socio-rhetorical interpretation is often analyzed through its five textures: inner, intertexture, social and cultural, ideological and sacred (Robbins, p. 3). The analysis presented here will use social and culture texture analysis to study Titus 1.

Social and cultural texture seeks to understand the implicit worldview of the author and the individual or group that the author is addressing (Robbins, 1996, p. 71). Three topics define social and cultural texture: specific, common, and final (Robbins, p. 71). Specific topics address whether the "narrator and characters in the story assert or imply the world is evil" or "how the world could be changed" (Robbins, p. 71). Common topics concern relationships amongst individuals such as the "honor-shame values characteristic of Mediterranean society" (Robbins, p. 76). Final topics define "one's cultural location" and group people "in terms of dominate culture, subculture, counterculture, contraculture, and liminal culture" (Robbins, p. 86). Each topic of social and cultural texture will be reviewed to extract insights from Paul's pastoral letter to Titus.

There are three parts to Titus conveniently organized by biblical scholars by chapter:

- Titus 1: Qualifications for Leaders

- Titus 2: How to Teach and Conduct Your Affairs

- Titus 3: Do Good Work for We Are Justified by Jesus Christ

The pericope of Titus 1 will be the focus of this social and cultural texture analysis to first determine and then analyze what Paul defines as good and what it means to be a good leader.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TEXTURE ANALYSIS OF TITUS 1

Paul's relationship with Titus was over many years. Earlier in life, Titus had traveled to Jerusalem with Paul ministering to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:1-2). Paul was a Roman and Titus was a Greek (Halley, 1965, p. 641). The island of Crete was well suited for Titus to minister and spread the Gospel due primarily to its rich Greek history. Paul knew this cultural connection and understanding would aide Titus's effectiveness as a leader in ministry (Halley, p. 642).

Titus may have felt at home in this mountainous Mediterranean geography and rich Greek heritage of Crete, but as a Christian leader he could not be further from the values and morality of the people of Crete. They were famous for their perversions and sexual immorality which started from ancient days as the people believed that the Greek god, Zeus (famous for his perversions), was born on the island (Wieland, 2009, p. 345). The people of Crete were also known as being corrupt and notorious for deception and trickery (Wieland, p. 346). Thus, when Paul quotes a prophet in Titus 1:12 by saying "Cretans are always liars" he is vehemently framing the social and cultural struggle that Titus will be up against as a leader.

The opening of Titus cannot be separated from the rest of Titus. Paul's openings were used to "highlight Paul's understanding of the Gospel," define his worldview, and "purpose in writing" (Wu, 2013, p. 766). Paul's letter to Titus was written about the same time as 1 Timothy, around A.D. 65 (Halley, p. 642). Titus 1:1-4 clearly paints Paul as a "conversionist." A conversionist is someone who believes "that the world is corrupt because people are corrupt" and that if people

were truly converted or changed then then "salvation" would come (Robbins, 1996, p. 76). Titus 1:5 explains that Paul left Titus in Crete to teach and "appoint elders". The dominant culture of the day was Roman in its influence throughout the Mediterranean. Therefore, it made perfect sense for Paul as the leader of Titus to delegate him as someone in his command to further appoint elders or leaders so as to build the Church throughout Crete.

As the Roman empire expanded, it asserted its dominant culture to spread its "styles of art, technologies, cults and customs" (Woolf, 1997, p. 339). "Romanization" was known as a "progressive movement" in which people groups "advanced towards a higher level of civilization or development, by shedding the least desirable features of 'traditional' society" (Woolf, p. 339). Many groups within the Roman empire had advanced cultures and unique identities, but they eventually relented their own views to accept "the conquerors' view" (Woolf, p. 341). Questioning authority in the Roman world was often met with a ruthless response. Paul knew this world and communicated to his delegates, such as Titus, in a teaching, but authoritative manner.

The Roman empire, which laid the foundation for Paul in how to structure organizations, cannot be underestimated in how effective it was in influencing individual's view of authority and "socio-economic structures" (Punt, 2016, p. 202). It "manifested" itself into every part of culture "through patronal links and alliances" (Punt, p. 203). The Roman military was everywhere and represented to many the empire itself (Punt, p. 208). Paul understood the chain of command and reminds Titus that Paul was called to preach by being "entrusted by the command of God our Savior" (Titus 1:3). Paul also knew that only the Gospel and the establishment of the Church could provide a hope for man. Even the Roman model of organization, that Paul viewed as successful, would eventually fail as demographic and economic growth proved out of balance throughout the empire (Erdkamp, 2016, p. 17).

The Roman culture placed a high emphasis on a "person's age or position in life" (Laurence, 2000, p. 444). Thus, when Paul calls Titus his "true child in a common faith," he is reminding Titus that Paul sees himself as a father figure to Titus with all of the responsibility and authority that any parent would have over their child (Titus 1:4). In a way, Titus was left on Crete to be the

model father (leader) for which the corrupt people of Crete could learn from just as Paul modeled leadership to Titus.

Paul understood that Christianity was a culture unique to itself. It would place Christians in a precarious state of being outside the dominant culture represented by Rome and not quite knowing how to establish a new culture or counter culture (Grimshaw, 2009, p. 39). Establishing leadership through effective selection and teaching of leaders within the Church would be the only way to develop a healthy organization that could provide the framework for Christians to establish themselves from a cultural perspective.

Paul was striving to define the culture of the early Church by setting the criteria for which leaders would be established. "Culture is a set of values which serve as a direction for human actions" (Dyczewski, 2016, p. 146). Paul wanted to define the path the way the leaders are selected, taught, and practice so that the Christian values would prevail throughout the Church and define its culture. In Titus 1:6-9, Paul defines the foundational qualities of leaders: "above reproach…not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination." In many ways, he was calling Titus to turn the treacherous Cretans into Christians that also looked like ideal Romans from a social and cultural perspective. What a task! To ram his point home, he goes on in verses 1:10-16, to remind Titus not to choose leaders who are "insubordinate, empty talkers, deceivers…or liars" because they are "detestable, unfit for any good work." Paul, the Roman, saw little value and worth salvaging anything in the Cretan culture. Thus, he charged Titus to choose believers to be leaders and make sure they did not retain any legacy of their inferior Cretan culture and if he found any that he was to "rebuke them sharply" (Titus 1:13).

DISCOVERED VALUES AND ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS OF GOOD LEADERS

Titus 1 details many value and ethical requirements that Paul espouses in leaders, especially church leaders. In his charge to Titus, he makes a repeated appeal and mandate for Titus to only choose leaders for service who displayed these values and ethics. In Table 1, identified values and ethical requirements of what make a good leader are listed by verse.

Table 1

Value and Ethical Requirement of Good Leaders	Titus 1 [Verse]
Servant of God (others)	1, 7, 9
Seeker of Truth	1, 9, 13, 14
Truthful	2, 12, 14
Responsible	3
Believing / Faithful	4, 13, 15
Above Reproach	6, 7
Loyal	6
Respectful of Authority	6, 10
Not Arrogant	7
Even Tempered/Self Controlled	7, 8
Hospitable	8
Disciplined	8
Teachable	9
Brave /Willing to Rebuke or Correct	9, 11, 13
Obedient	16

WHAT WAS EXPECTED OF EARLY CHURCH LEADERS?

Again, Titus 1:12 describes the Cretans as "liars," but it also calls them "evil beasts" and "lazy gluttons." Paul is challenging Titus to "tame" the wild characteristics of the Cretans (Wieland, 2009, p. 348). Church leaders were challenged to confront and "rebuke" those that they saw acting in way that went against the values that Paul was teaching to the people (Titus 1:13). For Paul, espousing the values identified in Table 1 were non-negotiable for those aspiring to be in Church leadership.

Titus, as a leader, was expected to "put in order" the Church and "appoint elders" (Titus 1:5). Titus's work was to identify and organize leaders to build the Church. Titus could not be a good leader without putting in action Paul's direction for him. Good leaders were disciplined to know the truth (Titus 1:1, 9, 13, 14) and be "above reproach" (Titus 1:6-7). However, knowing the truth was not enough for Paul to be a good leader. Good works was required. "They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works" (Titus 1:16). As a Roman, Paul measured a leader's effectiveness, by the amount and quality of their good works. Titus, as a leader, would be measured by Paul based not just by his own character, ethics and values, but also by his "creative missionary engagement" (his good works) in transforming Cretans into good leaders for the Church (Wieland, 2009, p. 354).

Early church leaders were expected to be individuals of high character, values, and meet ethical standards. They could not falter in any area and be considered a good leader. Paul, the believer and Roman, demanded that leaders maintain high values and ethical standards, set the example and be above reproach so as to produce other good leaders for the Church.

APPLICATION TO TODAY'S LEADERS

In every way, the values and ethical standards detailed in Titus 1 are applicable today. Good leaders should serve others by seeking truth, being responsible, above reproach, loyal, respectful of authority, not arrogant, self-controlled, hospitable, disciplined, teachable, willing to confront evil, and obedient (Titus 1). These values and ethical standards were thrust unto Titus by Paul because he knew that without them that the Cretan culture would overwhelm any efforts that he attempted to do to build the Church through the development of other leaders. A leader attempting to do good works must first practice and aspire to maintain these values and ethical standards. Then they can be the example for others to follow and be the good leader that is effective in their works. This requires discipline. Unfortunately, "in today's world and Church, disciplined Christian lives are the exception, not the rule" (Hughes, 1991, p. 17). Christian leaders desiring to be and do good, must prepare themselves and be disciplined in their desire to maintain their values and ethical standards lest the evil culture around them overwhelm any

good efforts they seek to produce. First, be above reproach and then challenge other leaders to do the same.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Paul, a believer and a Roman, despised the evil and ethically undisciplined culture of the people of Crete. Through his pastoral letter to Titus, he challenges him to be above reproach and to set and maintain high values and ethical standards in himself. Then he mandates that Titus do the same in those aspiring to be leaders in the Church. Leaders today do well to follow the same charge that Paul gives to Titus concerning values and ethical standards. If they do, then they will be positioned to do good and to be a good leader – one who is above reproach, has high values and ethics and faithfully serves others while challenging them to be and do the same.

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