

THRU THE BIBLE SYNTHESIS
"Part LVI: Titus - Addressing Weak Churches In Deteriorating Cultures"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) Last month, a young college couple who had been high school sweethearts in Delaware and who produced a child out of wedlock tried to hide the pregnancy from their upstanding parents: they delivered the baby in a motel, killing it and throwing it into a trash dumpster.

For their crime, government prosecutors are seeking the death penalty by lethal injection.

However, Judy Mellen, executive director of the Delaware chapter of the A. C. L. U. is outraged at the prosecutors, saying of the couple, "These kids are not criminals!" The argument runs that since late term abortions were legalized by our President, the only **mistake** the couple made was in not visiting an abortion clinic 15 miles from their home town high school! In reality, the ACLU and American President have the updated view while the prosecutors are defending a Delaware state statute that "still rests upon the Ten Commandments." (M. Charen, "The Delaware Tragedy," Rep.-Am., Nov. 27, '96, p. 8A)

In such an era and land where its people have such twisted values, how can we effectively disciple today's Americans?!

(2) We remember Reverend Jack Wyman of Prison Fellowship telling us of the effort by a greeting card company to help prisoners in a major area prison celebrate Mothers Day. The company sent large quantities of boxes full of Mothers Day cards, and the prisoners used every one of them to send loving notes to their mothers. Thinking it would be good to follow up this move for Father's Day, the company sent many boxes of Fathers Day cards to the prisoners. Those boxes with Fathers Day cards are still **unopened**, indicating that a major problem behind serious crime in our land is failure in fathering roles!

In a land where good fathering is desperately needed, how can Nepaug Church effectively minister?!

(3) A Nepaug attender recently told me of a nationally-known Christian musician who has said that the only way Christianity will be spread in the future is through **music! If MUSIC is the considered the only means of evangelizing the world TODAY, what is to happen to Nepaug Church if our music is not all that developed?!**

What about the church, today--how is it to be established?

(We turn to the "Need" section of the sermon . . .)

***Need:* "With the growth of apostasy and a corresponding spiritual weakness in even CHRISTIAN circles, how can STRONG churches ever develop and flourish? How will OUR church be able to fulfill the Great Commission when today's WORLD cultures are deteriorating?!"**

I. Over the centuries, man's spiritual decline led to his departure from God's values to leave the Island of Crete in cultural RUIN.

- A. Though God created the world and set man up as His deputy, sin deposed him, and Satan became ruler on earth, Gen. 1-5; 2 Cor. 4:4.
- B. When God chose Abraham to start a nation to check world sin (Gn. 12:1-3), Israel's failure left the Island of Crete in deep cultural decline:
 1. Crete's gentle climate gave men time to do more than make a living, but its small land mass and population growth left its people having to "sharpen their wits" to **keep** a living, Burns, West. Civ., p. 127.
 2. This sharpening of his **wits** gave man time to **explore** his **heart**.
 3. Well, with **sin** in man's **heart**, Crete developed a **lofty** but **sensual** culture (the Minoans) that **lured greedy barbarians** to invade until Crete's inhabitants were made up of **degenerate** men, Ibid., p. 128.
 4. Even a Cretan poet later described his people as "always deceivers, evil brutes, bellies inactive," Hendriksen, I-II Tim.-Tit., p. 352-353.

II. God thus had Paul write Titus about discipling in a failed culture:

- A. Paul's co-worker, Titus who sought to disciple Cretans had to counter their **cultural** decadence, Tit. 1:12 with Bi. Kno. Com., N. T., p. 763.
- B. Besides, though **Cretans** were to disciple **fellow Cretans**, they were hindered by a **leadership shortage**, Tit. 1:5, 10-11 with Mtt. 28:19f.
- C. Paul left Titus on Crete to erect churches in its decadent culture, 1:5.

III. In this letter, Paul revealed steps for such a ministry development:

- A. Step One - Start with the **preaching** of the **Scriptures**, 1:1-3. This is God's initial means for discipling men, 1 Cor. 1:21-25; 2 Tim. 4:1-2.
- B. Step Two - **Constitute** qualified **leaders** in local churches, 1:5-16. Without these, a church is "defective," Ryrie St. Bib., KJV ftn. to 1:5.
- C. Step Three - Provide "**grace-BASED lifestyle**" **teaching**, 2:1-3:15.
 1. Paul informed Titus to teach believers **healthy** doctrines, Tit. 2:1.

2. This teaching was that God's **grace** in **justifying** man **should cause** his **response** of upright **living**, 2:11-15, Ibid., **B.K.C..N.T.**, p. 765:
 - a. **Truth One** - God's grace saved man **FROM SIN**, teaching man that God wants him **NOT** to live in **sin**, Tit. 2:11-12.
 - b. **Truth Two** - God's grace will lead the believer into heaven's **glory**, showing this **goal** is to be **matched** by upright lives, 2:13.
 - c. **Truth Three** - Since Christ gave himself to **produce** such godly lives, the **grace** of God **must** thus **equip** the believer to be **ABLE** to **live** such lives by applying (positional) truth, 2:14-15.
3. Such "**grace**" **living** would produce **renewed lifestyles** as follows:
 - a. These **Cretans** could become **edifying family** members, 2:2-8.
 - b. They could become **responsible** at **work**, Tit. 2:9-10.
 - c. They could **submit** to human **government** as citizens who were **concerned** for the public good, 3:1.
 - d. They could become **gracious** toward **others** in bearing, 3:2-7.
 - e. They could **resist--not join--false teachers**, Tit. 2:8-11.
 - f. In place of **idleness**, they could **use** their **assets** and **time** to **promote** the Great Commission, Tit. 2:12-15; Mtt. 28:19-20.
4. (By formerly decadent **Cretans** promoting the Great Commission to reach **other Cretans**, **cultural** renewal on Crete was feasible!)

IV. Titus adds to the "thread of redemption" the insight that applying God's GRACE for VICTORY over SIN leads NOT ONLY to strong CHURCHES, but also to GLOBAL, CULTURAL renewal!

Application: *To establish strong churches and renew a decaying culture, we individually must first (1) believe on Christ as Savior from sin, Jn. 3:16; Tit. 1:1-3. (2) Then we apply POSITIONAL truth and fellowship with God via (a) confession of sin (1 Jn. 1:9) and (b) relying on the Holy Spirit (Ga. 5:16-23) for behavior control (c) to obey Scripture (1 Jn. 2:3-6). (3) Then, as we find God giving US victory over personal sin, we can SPREAD the victory globally as God leads and empowers by planting GRACE oriented churches outlined in Titus. (5) In this way, the church becomes God's vehicle of first PERSONAL--and by it--eventual world CULTURAL renewal.*

Lesson: *Strong Churches arise and cultural decay reverses if the GRACE of God is applied as follows: by (1) the preaching of Scripture, (2) godly church leadership influence and (3) teaching on grace, one learns that God saved him (a) FROM sin (b) UNTO glory, and that tells him he is to LIVE uprightly. (c) Since Titus 2:14-15 teaches that Christ's death to achieve these goals implies that regardless of their dysfunctional culture, even CRETANS must be ABLE to overcome sin, believers from even appalling backgrounds are encouraged to APPLY positional truth (cf. Rom. 7:15-8:5, etc.) to FACE and overcome their sins! (4) As this victory is duplicated through outreach, one's entire culture has hope of renewal!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message lesson . . .)

(1) In view of this message, here is an example of a successful cultural rehabilitation alternative to mass alcoholism in Ecuador.

In Tilivi, Ecuador, 400 families over 10 years consumed over 2,600 gallons of alcohol every month. Three alcohol wholesalers controlled the sale of the beverage for the village. As a result, more than 1,000 children in the town suffered malnutrition and death, not to speak of physical abuse from alcoholic parents.

An evangelistic outreach began in the village in the 1980s. Village leaders, including the three wholesalers, received Christ as their personal Savior. They then smashed their warehouses in front of the villagers as a public testimony. In a few years, the town's alcohol distribution centers were closed and the community became an evangelization center for the whole region.

At a missions conference, the mayor of the province's capital city said: "I want to thank you (missionaries) personally, in the name of all the people of our province and for the children who now have healthy skin, cheerfulness in their hearts, and no parasites in their bodies. Most of all, they have the presence of the gospel. Its message of peace and love changed the lives of people who for many years lived in a state of marginalization and poverty because of alcohol." (Reported by Jose Vasquez, World Vision, Ecuador as quoted in "Global Binge," by Barbara R. Thompson, World Vision, Dec. 1996-Jan. 1997, p. 4)

(2) Accordingly, we are committed to promoting the **grace** of God as follows: (a) because of insight into the **depth** of the need, following our Bible Synthesis series which will end in February, I will produce a much more **extensive** series than I've done before on Biblical Lifestyles in marriage, family, business and church life. **This series will emphasize lifestyles that are molded by God's GRACE**; we can thus build up **much more detailed** notes that can be reused **AS IS** by believers **or non-Christian "seekers"** who come to us out of our failing culture! (b) Also, Titus 1:9-14 notes that the main function of church leaders in a failed culture is their allegiance to **God's truth**. Thus, the Nepaug Church board and I are committed to keeping Bible **truth** our priority; **lifestyles molded by God's grace** will remain our central emphasis over program and building. Thus, what advances **result** will be **established** because its **PEOPLE** are **FIRST strong in Christ**.