

Fact or Fiction?

- *(Image: fact or fiction?)*
- Fictional evil is almost always interesting, and fictional good boring...
 - but in real life its the other way round!
 - real evil is grey and boring and repressive and life-removing - East Germany, North Korea, Zimbabwe
 - whereas real good is attractive - you want to be around genuinely good people, we enjoy their company, want to have them round for coffee, have them as friends...
- *cf the "real good" difference Christians make in Africa - Matthew Paris article*
 - and its final line: "The change is good"
- Paul's letter to Titus has come back again and again to this theme:
 - live a good life, a godly life, a life in-step with the Saviour who gave himself for you
 - applied and focused to different groups and in different ways, but that consuming concern...
- As we finish the letter lets look at various final **aspects of the good life**, the life lived in a godly manner, that Paul finishes with...

Aspects of the Good: Don't be divisive (v.9-11)

- *(Image: aspects of the good: don't be divisive)*
- **Warning against division (v.9)**
 - Paul's concern is that the church should remain united:
 - and sadly his concern is real, as churches down through the centuries have split or been internally divided - and weakened - often over minor issues
 - the things Paul was worried about were diversions, things that distracted from the essentials of the gospel
 - we don't do genealogies much today...
 - and I'm not sure that we have big fallings out over the law - whether the OT ceremonial Law had to be practised for salvation
 - Anything that turns us inwards as a church, and putting our efforts into sorting out the division rather holding out the life-saving gospel is a potential diversion
 - forms of worship?
 - perhaps forms of church government?
 - baptism, perhaps, for some?

Practical action to guard against division (v.10)

- Paul commends a particular, practical response:
 - not merely moaning or complaining about the situation, but seeking to respond
 - **warning and withdrawl** - pattern very similar to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18:
 - (15) *"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. (16) But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'* (17) *If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.*

What does a divisive spirit reveal? (v.11)

- Paul's concern arises from the fact that those who have a divisive spirit:
 - who are content to be distracted from living a godly life and holding out the good news of Jesus...
 - such folk reveal a flaw deep within - this behaviour asks the question **"Is Jesus their Lord?"**

Aspects of the Good: Build relationships (v.12,13,15)

- *(Image: aspects of the good: build relationships)*
- **Paul worked in team, valuing the contribution of others**
- **Contrast** between the division he's just warned against and the relationships he himself is operating within is start!
 - he's part of the team
 - he values the contributions of others - we may look up to the great apostle Paul, but he valued and appreciated the efforts and input of all these others!
 - a pattern he followed throughout his ministry
 - and a pattern Jesus himself modelled, drawing the twelve around him...
- Notice particularly how he **really wants Titus to come to have fellowship with him** ("do your best to come to me...")
 - this is not for Titus' benefit, but for Paul's
 - humble enough to know he needs fellowship, encouragement, up-building for the on-going work of ministry
- So do we!

Paul looked out for the needs of others

- He also had a concerns for his team-mates:
 - instructing help for Zenas and Apollos - they were probably gospel messengers, letter carriers, envoys from one part of the church to another...
 - in need of shelter, support, practical care, perhaps introductions and trust to execute their ministry

Paul knew the loving care of others

- Even as he is ministering to Titus in this letter, Paul does so from the context of a fellowship of believers:
 - *everyone with me...* (v. 15)
- Build relationships, look for, value, nurture and nourish

Aspects of the Good: Be productive (v.14)

- *(Image: aspects of the good: be productive)*
- Part of a living a godly life is to work hard, not being so heavenly minded they were no earthly use
 - ref imminent second-coming teaching that was fairly common in early church, so give up work and just hang around waiting for Jesus... **being lazy, and not commending the gospel to others!**
- **Core application is laziness now too...**
 - but culturally I wonder whether that's as much of an issue?
 - maybe!
- **But it did make me ponder what it means to live a balanced life:**
 - in Paul's day some had gotten so unbalanced that they gave up work, hoping for an imminent return of Christ!
 - in our day some of us have gotten so unbalanced that we think that God's kingdom will founder if we don't kill ourselves with over-work
 - we are to be **productive**, not workaholic

Aspects of the Good: Live in grace (v.15)

- *(Image: aspects of the good: live in grace)*
- To truly live a godly life, we need to be rooted and grounded in grace:
 - the "stress these things" of last week
 - **"Grace be with you all"** is no mere standard turn of phrase, a closing to a letter - or to a service!
 - it is a heartfelt prayer that these Christians in Crete, and particularly his son in faith and partner in ministry Titus, would themselves be people of grace:
 - not thinking they live **"good-enough-for-God"** lives themselves, but only know

Titus 3:9-15 The Lesson That Must Be Learned Fintry, 4/10/2009, pm

- God through his **gracious** forgiveness in Jesus Christ
- not thinking they can live **godly lives** in their own strength as Christians, but ever dependent on the **graciously given Holy Spirit** as they live for God each day

Conclusion

- *(Image: aspects of the good: conclusion)*
- So, what have we learned:
 - Paul's concern is for the faith - the trusting relationship with God; how is our faith?
 - Paul seeks to nurture and protect faith by appointing godly leaders; how are our leaders?
 - Paul knows that faith, our trusting relationship with God, needs to be lived out practically: young or old, male or female, slave or free, we are to live self-controlled, temperate, godly lives
 - Paul orients our living for God between Christians first and second comings, the two appearances (**epiphanies**)
 - and Paul's desire is that our life's ambition would be to please our Lord and commend Him to others
- *He wants us to live godly lives!*
 - having spent 7 Sundays with Titus, what difference has God's word to him through Paul made to us?