

The
New
Testament
in a Year

September 21-25

Titus 2-3; 1st Peter 1-3

This week's reflector is

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previous weeks?**

Most of them are posted at
[http://wsquare.ca/worship/516/
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Thanks to Wellington Square UC for
making this available.

Monday, September 21

Titus 2

Everyone has responsibility in the Christian community. Older women are to teach the younger, men must teach the young men, and slaves must mind their masters. Reputation and good name is so important in this early Christian era where the Christians are struggling to be socially acceptable. We know from political campaigns that enemies will jump at any flaw to discredit not only the person but also what they believe in. Paul is concerned about keeping up appearances but never for his own gain: it is always so that the word of God will not be discredited. After all, if not for the care taken in choosing leaders, the Gospel might never have been believed and have lasted long enough for us to hear it. Paul was being careful, but we owe him credit for that.

Chapter 2 ends with a strong testimony that God's salvation is for every person. It is God's grace that will train us (and the Cretans) to be pious, controlled, and godly. Verse 14 provides another indication of how important Paul believes good deeds are in the Christian profile.

Tuesday, September 22

Titus 3

Paul continues to remind Titus of what he should be teaching the people of Crete. Here he admits his own dark past and the fact that the grace of God redeemed him from that past. We see that Paul believes firmly that good works will proceed from faith, given in grace by God the Saviour (or God, and our Saviour). Paul alludes to the importance of baptism (water or washing of rebirth) and renewal of the Holy Spirit and the part these play in God's salvation (verse 5). The doctrine of justification is alluded to. Next to changing their reputation, good works are what is most important to Paul for the Cretan fellowship.

The final paragraph provides an intriguing glimpse into the teaching community that Paul had gathered by this time. Titus delivered letters and accompanied Paul. Tychicus was also a trusted messenger (Col.4:7 and Eph 6:21.) Apollos is named in Acts 18:24 as a teacher. Zenas, is called a lawyer, which would make him the only one mentioned in the New Testament.

This passage also gives us a clue to the further travels of Paul, that most traveled of apostles. Nicopolis was desirable as a central location from which to carry out work in the province of Dalmatia.

Wednesday, September 23

1st Peter 1

Generally, persecution because of our faith is something of which we know little or nothing. Peter writes here, from Rome, to certain people of the first century who were forced to flee Rome as persecution of Christians became rampant. As such, first Peter gives hope to all believers even now who are experiencing times of trouble, or, as Peter names such times, "Fiery trials."

In the first chapter Peter encourages those who have been exiled to hold firm to the faith that they have in God who will judge them by their good deeds. He recognizes that these believers of AD 81-96 never had the opportunity to see Jesus personally (as he did) but praises them for believing anyway. He reminds them of the tenets of the faith, and of the long historical foundation that backs up their new belief that is being questioned. Verse 25 is a quote from Isaiah 40:6-8.

Simon Peter the apostle is generally believed to be the author of 1 Peter. It is also held that Silvanus helped him to write it, as the Greek composition is more than a Galilean fisherman would be capable of.

Thursday, September 24

1st Peter 2

God expects those under fire to hold firm to their faith. A part of holding that faith is living a pure life for that will show your persecutors that you are a good person.

It can be discouraging to be living in exile with the powers of government and religion against you. Peter tries to buoy up the spirits of the exiles by reminding them that they are the chosen people of God and they can be proud of that. They are also told to not make trouble but be obedient so that they do not reinforce the notion the persecutors have that Christianity is evil.

The example of Jesus' suffering is held up for them. Jesus was persecuted even though he was innocent of the charges against him. At a time when it would certainly be the easier course to renounce their new beliefs, Peter reminds the people of how much better off they are now, morally and spiritually.

Friday, September 25

1st Peter 3

Peer continues to tell the people how important it is to appear to others to have exemplary behavior in keeping with the Roman standards of the day. Peter has a difficult task, for these are new Christians and Romans, who do not know the history of their faith as Jewish people might. He tries to hold up Sarah as a role model for the women.

Neither, it seems, are they all from cultured Roman families, for their ideas of deportment are not what Peter is looking for. He, and the other apostles, want to see nothing but the best of manners from everyone so that there is less to criticize, and more to recommend the Christian faith.

At the close of the chapter Peter teaches them to recognize the importance of having a spirit of unity in their community. They should curb their desire to seek retributive justice, but instead hold in their anger and give a blessing.

In situations of injustice, when should we hold back our anger, and when is it valid to vent it?