

## **Doctrine & Devotion – How Christ Takes Devoted Disciples and Changes Cultures**

Titus 2:1-10

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In the mid 1950s, Jim Elliot and four other missionaries, including their pilot, Nate Saint, left for Ecuador to evangelize the Waodani, an ancient tribe never reached by man. They made contact with the tribe from the airplane using a loudspeaker and a basket to pass down gifts. After several months, the missionaries decided to build a base just a short distance from the village. Encouraged by one or two friendly encounters, they began plans to visit the Waodani. Then in January 1956, they landed a plane on a small beach in the river near the village. At first, the Waodani seemed friendly, but raising their spears, they attacked, and Jim Elliot was, that day, the first of the five missionaries to be speared to death, including Nate Saint, the pilot.

The Waodani had been a tribe in decline. Their fear of one another, their honour killings, and their vengeance culture was destroying the population. If something didn't change, there would be nothing left of them. But what brought about the change was the death of these five brave men who were bringing the gospel to the Waodani.

When Paul left Titus on Crete, the island wasn't as bad as the Waodani. But things were very difficult. Young men served as mercenary soldiers, and both young men and women had loose morals. The older population was given to alcoholism. And to be a Cretan was no compliment, as Epimenedes had said that Cretans are lazy gluttons, wild beasts, and liars. One of the words that was used to describe a liar in the common Greek was kretizo – to be a Cretan. And anyone who has read a little bit of Calvin & Hobbes by Bill Watterson knows that in his cartoon, it's never a compliment to be called 'a Cretan.'

But Paul saw that there was a gospel opportunity. Crete was ripe for Christ. We don't know the exact details of when he was there, but his missionary companion, Titus, was left on the island to help establish the churches. The new Christians had lives that were a total wreck, and the false teachers who had come with their law-based approach were only making matters worse. How could the church have any traction on Crete if the lives of Christians were exactly the same, if not worse, than the Cretans?

### **Don't Disconnect Doctrine from Duty**

Paul tells Titus to teach them what is consistent with sound doctrine. The word Paul uses to describe doctrine has the idea of soundness in health – healthy doctrine. He makes it clear that the Cretans need the healthy teaching of the gospel so that their lives and homes become healthy.

Without soundness and health, there were three things that were happening. First, as these Christians lived inconsistently with the truth of the Bible, they were living in a way that made the non-Christians revile the word of God (2:5). Non-Christians watched these other Christians, saw no difference in their lives and even thought that their new-found religion had made them worse, and so non-Christians slandered them, the message of the Bible, and the God of the Bible. Paul didn't see this as a little problem – he saw that God's reputation was at stake in the world (see Isa. 52:5).

Second, people were speaking badly about the Christians, condemning them (2:8). The Christians' bad behaviour made it easy for the non-Christian Cretans to cancel the Christians. Why listen to a Christian speak up about injustice when their lives are just as much if not more of a train-wreck than anyone else? It would be better to not listen to them but just dismiss them out of hand. Paul tells Titus to teach these new believers doctrinal Christianity that leads to practical Christianity so that they are not condemned and spoken of in an evil way.

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Third, Paul makes it clear that the message of a Saviour who lays down his life for his people is supposed to be attractive, but the Cretan way of life destroys the beauty of the transforming news about being forgiven by Christ's death, declared righteous by the Father, and empowered by the Spirit. Christianity is not compelling when good words are disconnected from zealous works.

In other words, Paul wants Titus to use the apostolic authority to stop the disconnect between doctrinal beliefs and the duty of Christian mission. Doctrines have implications. Ideas have consequences. And bad behaviour destroys a compelling Christian witness. Who will believe someone that the death and resurrection is life-changing news when your life is a train-wreck? When your doctrine and devotion are disconnected, the word of God is reviled, you will be condemned and cancelled, and there will be nothing compelling nor attractive about Christ.

### **Connect Your Confession with Character**

So as Paul tells Titus to teach what accords with sound doctrine (v. 1), and the purpose of his teaching is to be very practical – it needs to produce faith, hope, and endurance (v. 2). This triad sounds a lot like faith, hope, and love, with the difference being that endurance is the result of hope. Healthy beliefs lead to healthy lives and healthy homes. Doctrinal teaching needs to be practical teaching so that faith, hope, and endurance are produced in the lives of Christians so that God's word is not reviled, Christians are not spoken of as evil people, and that the gospel is attractive and beautiful to a confused world.

How does the good news about Jesus bring about change to an island like Crete or an area like North London?

*First, as Christians connect their confession with their character, we will grow in Christlike behaviour.* Let's step back for a moment and see how Paul makes this connection. In ch. 1, Paul gave Titus a clear description about what a church leader's character is to look like. Now, Paul connects those character traits to older men and women as well as younger men and women. Not only is a church leader to be reverent, not addicted to much wine, and teach what is good, but so are the older women. Not only is a church leader to be temperate, self-controlled, sound in faith, and worthy of respect, so are older men. In other words, the character of an elder as a church leader should be the aim of every Christian.

*Second, as Christians connect their confession with their character, we will need Christlike examples.* When Paul talks about teaching in vv. 3ff, he is not talking about formal classes, but the school of life being the way of imitation, and he makes that clear in v. 7. If the men of Crete were angry, flying off the handle, and not self-controlled, how could anyone expect the young men to be any different? If older women were gossips, fault-finding, and overly critical, how would the younger women behave? Older men and women were to model what Christlike character looked like.

Paul tells Titus that Christlike examples are to be rooted in God's design of men and women. Since God had made Adam to serve and protect his wife by being a protector of the first garden and a producer of fruitfulness, so should Christian men be those who use their strength to protect their homes, being self-controlled in their use of authority and power so that their power and authority is used to serve and build up, not tear down. A husband who is demanding, pushy, and authoritarian is no example of how Christ's power was used to lay down his life as a sacrifice.

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Women likewise are to grow in their skills of loving their own husbands and children, oriented towards home, ensuring that their home and children are filled with love, not fault-finding and being overly critical.

In other words, if you want to see how a culture will be changed, look into the home. But homes need examples of older saints. We need older men who are not moving into retirement and ready to just take it easy, but older men who want to be involved in the lives of younger men. We need older women who will care about young moms and new families, not just their own pursuits and interests. We need models to follow. I think of my own father, the example he set of honouring Christ by leading us in worship by reading the Bible around the table, praying for us, and pointing us to Christ. I think of my mother-in-law, who is so very wise and loving in everything that she says about her husband. I think of my grandmother, who was gentle and patient. I think of my wife's grandfather, a man who was hard working and tenderhearted towards his children.

Godly examples of men who use their strength and authority to serve, godly women who used their submissiveness to love and bring moral direction and purity into their homes. And God has designed it that we learn how to serve and love by having older men teach younger men, older women teach younger women.

So connecting our confession will bring Christlike behaviour through Christlike examples. *But third, notice that connecting our confession and character requires consistency.* When Paul talks to Titus about slaves in vv. 9-10, he is talking about people who had to work for their masters to pay off debt, not people who had been stolen. The topic of modern slavery is completely different from Bible times. Because these household servants managed their master's finances, Paul doesn't want Christians who are enslaved by debt to be stealing or being defiant, but he wants them to be the kind of people who work hard, pay off their debts, and show that they are not part of the revolution that seeks to overthrow power by rebellion but who bring about change by the grace of God.

And this is Paul's commendation in v. 11 – it is God's grace that changes us. He enables us to say no to evil, yes to what is good, and by looking at our Saviour who laid down his life for us, we see that our consistent, Christlike character will challenge a world that is in Cretan chaos.

The Waodani tribe, formerly known as the Aucas, are a well-known indigenous tribe from the jungles of Ecuador. In 1956, this is the tribe that speared Nate Saint, Jim Elliot, Ed McCulley, Roger Youderian, and Pete Flemming to death. This tragedy gave way to one of the most well known stories of martyrdom, sacrifice, and Gospel transformation. Due to the hard work of these men, Jim's widow, Elisabeth Elliot, and Rachel Saint (sister of Nate), many in the tribe came to know Christ.

After Rachel's death in 1994, the Waodani asked Steve Saint (son of Nate) to live with them. At this time, the Waodani considered Steve one of their own, and Steve considered Mincaye, one of the men who killed his father, his adopted father.

How did this come about? In April 2020, Mincaye died. Steve Saint wrote a tribute to this man who killed his father and became an adoptive father to him and his family:

He was born into a violent "Stone Age" culture in the Amazon Rain Forrest of eastern Ecuador, South America.

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Mincaye, whose name means “Wasp,” died April 28, 2020 at home in the tiny village of Tzapino of natural causes related to old age. He was between 88 and 91 years of age. Mincaye is survived by his wife Ompodae (Otter), thirteen children, fifty some grandchildren, many many great grandchildren and tens of thousands of people who saw him as proof of God’s redeeming and transforming power.

When “Grandfather Mincaye,” as we affectionately knew him, helped five other Waodani warriors spear my father Nate Saint, Jim Elliot, Pete Fleming, Roger Youderian and Ed McCully to death on a river sandbar in 1956, there was no reason to believe anyone outside of his small clan and the five bereaved families would ever take note of that incident.

Nevertheless, millions of people in North America and Europe followed radio news releases that five North American missionaries were missing in the Ecuadorian jungle. For most of a week there was no word of their fate. When a search party finally found their five, spear-riddled bodies the question was, “Why?”.

The term “Tragedy” accompanied virtually every radio, newspaper, and magazine article as the news of these vicious and seemingly senseless killings spread. But sixty-four long years later, it seems clear that Genesis 50:20 was about to come true again. “What man meant for evil, God meant for good.”

There has been no greater ambassador of that message than the life of Grandfather Wasp. Mincaye is also the main character in the feature film, “End of the Spear.” When “End of the Spear” in book and movie form became available, Mincaye traveled around the United States and Canada telling his life story. This amazing jungle warrior who counted only up to twenty on his fingers and toes, personally impacted hundreds of thousands of people in audiences as large as forty-five thousand. The movie in which his life plays the leading role has now been translated into the mother tongues of approximately one quarter of the world’s population.

Mincaye’s most frequent speaking theme was, “We lived angry, hating and killing, ‘ononque’ (for no reason), until they brought us God’s markings (the Bible). Now, those of us who walk God’s trail live happily and in peace.” Then he would often ask, “How long did you have God’s Markings before you brought them to us?” “Waa, iñinamai” (well, I don’t know). “Maybe if we had known sooner that ‘Waengongi’ (the Creator) did not see it well that people should live angry, hating and killing for no reason, we could have walked God’s trail sooner.”

We traveled together, ate together, shared the same room, and spoke together. I have known Mincaye since I was a little boy when he took me under his wing and had his sons teach me to blowgun hunt. He was one of my dearest friends in the world. Yes, he killed my father, but he loved me and my family. One of my grandsons is named Mincaye.

(taken from <https://www.itecusa.org/mincaye/> - last accessed July 25, 2020).

How does the gospel change a culture? By the character of Christlike people who lay down their lives for others. Let’s bring the message and live the transforming power of the gospel. And God will be pleased to take Cretans and make them Christians.