

What Does Paul Mean When He Tells Titus, “Let No One Disregard You”?

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Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority.

Let no one disregard you.

Titus 2:15

So, what does Paul mean when he writes Titus to “let no one disregard (περιφρονέω, *periphroneō*)¹ you”? This final verse of chapter 2 begins with a general command to “declare (λαλέω, *laleō*),” or “teach,” certain things. Paul has just laid out sound doctrine for every age and station within the church. Thus, these are the ideas Paul has in mind (Titus 2:1–10), as well as his teachings on salvation and Christian living (Titus 2:11–14). Paul is not telling Titus to become un-despicable by popularity tricks; he is telling him to leave no legitimate room for dismissal of the message or the messenger. The command is active: Titus must do something that prevents contempt from taking hold.

Titus was to “exhort,” or “encourage (παρκαλέω, *parakaleō*).²” To exhort is to teach or urge, focusing on the positive aspects of teaching Christian truth. Exhortation was often used as another word for preaching. John the Baptist exhorted people when he preached the good news (Luke 3:18). Peter exhorted people when he preached at Pentecost (Acts 2:40). Exhortation is even called a spiritual gift in Romans 12:8.

The expression continues the contrast between Paul’s characterization of Titus and the false teachers, who are “empty talkers” and must be silenced because they are teaching “what they ought not to teach” (1:10–11). Titus, however, must say what is “consistent

¹ Some translations say “despise.” The word means “to think around, look down on, or to treat as insignificant.”

² Kent Hughes illustrates the root idea of *parakaleo* “to come alongside and encourage” with the following example: “I see this exemplified every time my church has a roller skating party, and the parents put their little ones on skates for the first time. Mom and Dad skate with their child, holding on to his or her hands, sometimes with the child’s feet on the ground and sometimes in the air. But all the time the parents are alongside encouraging... [exhortation] is a wonderful gift, and we are to place it at Christ’s feet and be willing to be worn out in its use.” https://www.preceptaustin.org/titus_214-15#2:15.

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with” (πρέπει, *prepei*; cf. 1 Timothy 2:10; 1 Corinthians 11:13; Ephesians 5:3) sound teaching that promotes the spiritual health of its recipients.³ The connection between true and false teaching is corroborated by church history, where heresy has frequently served as the impetus for the cultivation of sound, orthodox doctrine.⁴

To “rebuke,” or “correct (ἐλέγχω, *elenchō*),” focuses on the negative aspect of defending truth against false teachers, and speaking against sin. Titus had been commissioned by Paul for his leadership position and was to follow Paul’s commands “with all authority (ἐπιταγή, *epitagē*)⁵.” “With all authority” roots Titus’s words in Christ’s own authority, not personal preference. *Epitagē* refers to a royal command that is not negotiable, but mandatory.⁶ Titus had been commanded by an apostle and was not to let false teachers—or his own insecurities—keep him from fulfilling his important calling to the people of Crete.

It should be observed that “encourage” and “rebuke” must be in seamless balance. “Encourage” means to build up the willing, while “rebuke” means to expose error in the wayward. Both are necessary and omitting either invites scorn.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, “Speak these things and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you As I have already reminded you, Titus was a young man. People are apt to despise the pastoral office when it is held by a young man. Yet they ought always to respect it, whether it is held by a young man or an old man. God knows best who is most fitted for the work of the ministry. Those of us who are getting old must never look with any kind of scorn or contempt upon those who are commencing their service, for we, too, were young once. You cannot measure a man’s grace by the length of his beard, nor by the number of his years.”⁷

³ In all of its occurrences in the Letters to Timothy and Titus “sound teaching” (ὕγιαινούση διδασκαλία) contrasts with false teaching (cf. 1 Timothy 1:10; 2 Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:9).

⁴ Köstenberger, A. J. (2021). *1-2 Timothy & Titus*. (T. D. Alexander, T. R. Schreiner, & A. J. Köstenberger, Eds.). Lexham Press, 328-329.

⁵ This word is used in Titus 1:3 and 1 Timothy 1:1 with reference to the command of God.

⁶ William Barclay writes that *epitagē* “is the word Greek uses for the injunctions which some inviolable law lays on a man; for the royal command which comes to a man from the king; and above all for the instructions which come to a man either directly or by some oracle from God. For instance, a man in an inscription dedicates an altar to the goddess Cybele *kat’ epitagēn*, in accordance with the command of the goddess, which, he tells us, had come to him in a dream. Paul thought of himself as a man holding the king’s commission” (*Daily Study Bible Series*).

⁷ Spurgeon, C. H. (2014). *Spurgeon Commentary: Titus* (E. Ritzema, Ed.). Lexham Press, 318.

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Edmund Hiebert observes, “Since this letter would be read in the churches, the remark was apparently intended as much for the Cretans as for Titus himself.”⁸

LET NO ONE DISREGARD YOU

When Paul says, “Let no one disregard you,” he calls believers to speak God’s truth so clearly, boldly, and consistently that contempt finds no foothold. Titus was to command respect from his people. Paul gave this same challenge to Timothy: “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). No one can lead properly without authority. Sadly, there are people who will attempt to bypass authority. Nevertheless, visible integrity silences many critics (cf. Titus 2:7-8).

This phrase addresses the potential for opposition and disrespect that leaders might face. Paul encourages Titus to stand firm in his role despite any challenges. The Greek word “*kataphroneo*” means to think little of or to look down upon. It underscores the importance of living a life that commands respect through integrity and adherence to the truth.

Titus—as well as all Pastors, Elders and Teachers—must stand firm in delegated authority. The Apostle Paul writes: “For this reason I write these things while I am away from you, that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down” (2 Corinthians 13:10). When the teacher remembers whose authority he carries, he will not shrink back when challenged.

John Calvin: “For men given to curious inquiries, and eager about trifles, dislike the commandments to lead a pious and holy, life as being too common and vulgar. In order that Titus may meet this disdain, he is enjoined to add the weight of his authority to his doctrine. It is with the same view (in my opinion) that he immediately adds, — Let no man despise thee. Others think that Titus is instructed to gain the ear of men, and their respect for him, by the integrity of his life; and it is indeed true that holy and blameless conduct imparts authority to instruction. But Paul had another object in view; for here he addresses the people rather than Titus. Because many had ears so delicate, that they despised the simplicity of the gospel; because they had such an itch for novelty, that hardly any space was left for edification; he beats down the haughtiness of such men, and strictly charges them to desist from despising, in any way, sound and useful doctrine.

⁸ Guzik, D. (2013). *David Guzik’s Commentaries on the Bible: 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*. Santa Barbara: Enduring Word Media (Titus 2:15).

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This confirms the remark which I made at the outset, that this Epistle was written to the inhabitants of Crete rather than to any single individual.”⁹

A FINAL THOUGHT

Just because someone claims that God spoke to him (“I feel God is leading me to do this”) does not make him an authority. Authority does not come from self-proclamation. Neither do people have authority over the Bible. Education gives no one that privilege. On the other hand, the pastor is to preach the Word of God with authority. He is to teach the Bible as if it is God speaking when he clearly expounds what God has said.

Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.

1 Peter 4:11 (NLT)

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⁹ Calvin, J. (1998). Titus (electronic ed., Tt 2:15). Ages Software.