

**Who Was Titus?**  
**Titus 1:4-5**  
**ABC 11/8/20**

I want to begin by telling you about a missionary friend, someone I consider a friend in the faith. I don't have a close relationship with him, but he's an example & encouragement of a godly pastor. Although he hasn't had a seminary education he has a lot of hands-on experience in difficult ministry & has the heart of a true servant-leader. If you were to talk to him, I think you'd be impressed with his genuineness & godliness. This brother in the Lord was saved under the ministry of a well-known evangelist. He wasn't only converted under this man's teaching, but was personally disciplined by him & ministered under his mentorship. According to all who know him, he has great people skills, but more importantly, integrity. He's someone you can count on when the times get tough. He has a knack for dealing with problems in churches & for being an encouragement & comfort to those who are spiritually down. He's someone who can deal with false teachers & divisive members with grace. One thing I appreciate about him is his love & affection for God's people. He's on a missionary assignment which is his 1<sup>st</sup> time being on his own. The area where he's serving is difficult because the church there is young & weak & the native people are notorious for their wickedness. He's not really a church-planter but more of a church-strengthener. His forte is finding godly men who he can train to lead the church so he can go elsewhere to do the same. This man I'm telling you about I've never met in person but only on the pages of Scripture. This man lived in the 1<sup>st</sup> century & his name is Titus. This book we're studying was named after him & written to him. If I were to quiz you on everything you know about Titus & about Crete, what would you come up with? If you're like me, not much. Let's turn to Paul's letter to Titus & read the 1<sup>st</sup> chpt. **1-16**

We're going to look at vs 4-5 in today, but we read the whole chapter because it helps us see the flow & context of Titus, the man & his mission on the island of Crete. As vs 12 says, the people on this island are described as liars, lazy, & gluttons. If that's not enough, there were legalists there as well (11). This was a tough situation but Titus was up to the challenge.

**1. Crete** Anyone been there? Crete is roughly equidistant from Europe, Africa, & Asia & because of its strategic position, many nations have wanted to claim it. It's about 160 miles long & upto 35 miles wide. It rises from sea level to mountains around 8k feet. The highest, Mt Ida, is 1 of the 2 places said to be the birthplace of Zeus,<sup>1</sup> which explains the widespread influence of myth & legend which was reflected in the behavior & morals of Cretan culture. We have the 1<sup>st</sup> mention of Crete in the NT in Acts 2 where we're told there were Jews from Crete in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. It's probable that some of the 3,000 saved that day were from Crete. They then returned home & were the 1<sup>st</sup> to introduce Christianity to the island. The Christians on Crete were new, immature in the faith, & doubtless small in number. In order to supervise house churches spread across such a large area, Titus obviously would need help, & Paul's first instruction to him were to train & appoint elders in each church (1:5).<sup>2</sup> Today the island of Crete is a place where some choose to vacation. After all, it's a Greek island. But for Titus this was no vacation. Vs 9 says there were those who were wrong doctrinally & needed to be refuted. Vs 10 describes many deceivers who are rebellious & empty talkers. Vs 11 says they're disturbing entire families with their deviant teaching that needed to be silenced. Vs 15 describes the people as defiled. Vs 16 describes them as denying God, detestable, disobedient even though they profess to know God. Are you getting the idea? 2:5 suggests there may have been some dishonoring of God's Word & there was a need for discipleship among younger men & women by those with greater maturity. 3:9 says some were debaters & disputers about the Law. Vs 10 of chpt 3 says there were divisive people that need to be warned. This wasn't an easy place of ministry. This is a tough place, spiritually speaking. This isn't a ministry where, when you ask for volunteers, everyone jumps to be the 1<sup>st</sup>. This is a place of ministry for a strong man of God. That was the situation Titus was faced with. The need is the same today. God inspired these words not just for the 1<sup>st</sup> century, but for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Not just in Crete but in Oregon & our country as well.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.explorecrete.com/mythology/zeus-birth.html>

<sup>2</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Titus*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary, p xii

**2. Titus** Today we're going to get to know a little about Titus, the man & his mission, beginning with **A. His Mission**. Vs 5 summarizes his mission & gives the main point of the whole book. **5**

There weren't any highways, trains, or ubers & travel was difficult due to the mountains & rugged terrain. It would take time for Titus to do what vs 5 says. But the spiritual terrain was even more rough & tough to navigate. We already read of the reputation of Cretans in vs 12. It's also been said, *the moral level of its inhabitants was deplorable. Their ferocity & fraud were widely attested; their falsehood was proverbial; the wine of Crete was famous, & drunkenness prevailed.*<sup>3</sup> Into this ungodly mission field Paul left Titus to organize the church & to **speak & exhort & reprove with all authority** (2:15). Also, the winds could be strong around Crete, as we learn in Acts 27 where Paul's ship gets blown off course & shipwrecked there. But it wasn't only ships that would get blown in. The various winds of doctrines & religions would be blown in, causing immature Christians to be tossed about by the winds of false beliefs. One writer said *Crete's location & importance for trade meant it would be influenced by philosophies & religious teaching from all parts of the Mediterranean world. The people were adherents to a number of religions & cults, including the worship of Zeus ... Apollo, Artemis, & Aphrodite.*<sup>4</sup> Its history was legendary, as the supposed birthplace of Zeus, & its people worshipped a number of the gods of Greek mythology, including the minotaur (half-bull, half-man). Vs 5 suggests that Titus was a companion with Paul but was left in Crete & Paul told him to complete the unfinished business, beginning with appointing biblically qualified elders, which the rest of chpt 1 is about. Titus 3:12 tells us the mission on Crete wasn't to be permanent, but that Titus was to return to be with Paul (at Nicopolis) as soon as he could. Apparently, Paul didn't just ship Titus off to Crete but was there with him for awhile & intentionally left Titus behind. Tradition says this was a mission not recorded in Acts that Paul & Titus did together after Paul was released from his 1<sup>st</sup> Roman imprisonment.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> half of vs 5 gives us 2 main reasons Paul left Titus in Crete that sum up the book: 1) To appoint elders in every city (chpt 1) &, 2) to set in order what remains (chpts 2-3). Vs 5 also gives

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<sup>3</sup> D Edmond Hierbert, quoted on [https://www.preceptaustin.org/titus\\_15-9](https://www.preceptaustin.org/titus_15-9)

<sup>4</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *ICC*, pp 150-51

some indication that Titus was well-trusted by Paul, trusted enough that he'd put such a difficult & delicate assignment into his care. As one writer said: *When a job is hard, there are basically 2 kinds of people. With one you say, "The job is really hard, so we can't send him." With the other you say, "The job is really hard, so we must send him." Titus seemed to be of the 2<sup>nd</sup> kind.*<sup>5</sup> In vs 4 Paul calls him **my true child in a common faith**. Of course, this doesn't mean his biological child. The key phrase is **in a common faith**. Titus is Paul's son in the faith, his *spiritual son*. Paul's calling him **son** or **child** indicates Titus was probably younger. But more importantly, the phrase **child in a common faith** indicates Paul's personal connection with him as a spiritual father. Paul must have disciplined Titus & helped him grow in the faith as his mentor & example. It's possible God used Paul as the human instrument in the conversion of Titus. **True child** literally means legitimate. Titus was Paul's genuine or authentic son in the faith. When Paul says **common faith** it expresses equality. They were both on equal footing in the arena of faith. In fact, Paul wants the Cretan Christians to know that Titus comes with his full support & authority & that what this letter says is God's absolute truth. What do we know about Titus?

**B. The Man** We find our early church history from the book of Acts, but it doesn't include everything. We get some of Peter & his work, a little of Stephen & Philip, & a lot about Paul. It's easy to get the impression Paul converted the world single-handedly! But it wasn't so. Many labored in the gospel with him & the majority of them we know nothing of & some only get the briefest mention. Titus is one of them. It seems probable that Titus came into Paul's life during his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey, although Luke makes no mention of him in the book of Acts. We don't know where or how he was converted or when or how he met & became associated with Paul. After Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> Roman imprisonment, he took Titus with him to Crete, where they ministered together. When Paul departed, he left Titus behind to carry on the ministry (1:5). To get to know Titus more, turn to 2 Cor 7. Titus isn't mentioned by name in the book of Acts, so we don't know as much about him as many other key men in the early church. He's often overlooked & overshadowed by Timothy, although Titus appears to be the stronger of the 2, & Titus is given much less ink in books &

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<sup>5</sup> David Guzik, *Enduring Word Commentary*, [www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik\\_david/StudyGuide2017-Tts/Tts-1.cfm](http://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Tts/Tts-1.cfm)

commentaries on the *Pastoral Epistles* (Timothy/Titus). But it's not just the famous NT characters we're to learn from, it's also the lesser known men that God wants us to learn from, those who served in difficult places like Titus in Crete. What can we learn of Titus in Scripture? 2 Cor 7:5-10 Paul writes,

**For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within. But God, who comforts the depressed or downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus; & not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more. For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—*for* I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while—I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of* repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of God*, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation....**

Paul traveled from Ephesus to Macedonia & Titus reported to him the situation in Corinth as soon as possible. The failure of Titus to meet him at Troas troubled Paul greatly, but a reunion in Macedonia relieved him & as a result the letter of 2 Cor was written. He continues in vss 13-15...

**For this reason we have been comforted. & besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be *the truth*. His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear & trembling.**

On his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey Paul spent 3 years in Ephesus, during this time Paul wrote 1 Cor. Titus could've been the bearer of this letter. We do know that Titus was his ambassador to Corinth to deal with difficulties that had arisen there. From Ephesus Paul went to Troas, Titus was supposed to meet him there but they didn't meet up. So Paul went on to Macedonai & Titus met up with him there having come from Corinth & having dealt with matters there. Paul then went to Corinth before going back to Israel. The work Titus had done prepared the way for him to come back to them & take the collection Titus had organized & return with it to Jerusalem. So while Paul was in Ephesus Titus was working in Corinth. Continuing in 2 Cor 8:1-6 we read:

**Now, brethren, we *wish to* make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy & their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, & beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, & *this*, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord & to us by the will of God. So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well....**

16-23 Thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus. For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord. We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in *the things of the gospel has spread* through all the churches; & not only *this*, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, & *to show* our readiness, taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift; for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. We have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested & found diligent in many things, but now even more diligent because of *his* great confidence in you. As for Titus, *he is my partner & fellow worker* among you; as for our brethren, *they are* messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ.

Some in Corinth had spurned Paul & his teaching as elementary & they rebelled against his authority. Things weren't well between Paul & the Corinthians. There was a problem with immorality in the church, division into factions & a scorning of Paul. This led Paul to write a harsh letter to them (since lost to us) & it was probably Titus who delivered it, the so-called **severe** or **tearful letter** Paul mentions in 2 Cor 2. Personal attacks against Paul threatened the loss of his leadership in Corinth, but Paul, wishing to avoid another painful visit, placed his fate in the hands of Titus. It was a delicate task, smoothing over of a tense situation which had arisen between Paul & the Corinthians, a task which clearly demanded a man of great tact & force of character. 2 Cor 12:16-18 continues...

be that as it may, I did not burden you myself; nevertheless, crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit. *Certainly* I have not taken advantage of you through any of those whom I have sent to you, have I? I urged Titus *to go*, & I sent the brother with him. Titus did not take any advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit & *walk* in the same steps?

Titus seems to have possessed a particular affection & concern for the Corinthians. Titus brought about a reconciliation between Paul & the Corinthian church. Paul's following visit to them was friendly because Titus had smoothed out the situation. Both 2 Cor 8:18 & 12:18 say when Titus was sent to Corinth another brother was sent with him, described as **the brother who is famous among all the churches** (8:18). Some believe this would be Luke & it's been suggested Titus was Luke's brother. According to this thinking, Luke doesn't mention Titus in Acts so as not to promote his brother. What we do know is that Titus was with Paul at Ephesus on his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey & was sent to Corinth, possibly bearing the letter we know as 1 Cor in about 57 AD (2 Cor 12:18). Titus meets Paul in Macedonia; precedes him to Corinth, probably bearing the letter now known as 2 Cor in the same year (2 Cor 2:13; 7:6, 13; 8:6, 23). Titus, while in Corinth, supervises the

collections to relieve the suffering of Jerusalem Christians (1 Cor 16:1–3; 2 Cor 8:6). Titus knew by experience the trials & disappointments of leading a group of believers who were immature, selfish, divisive, & worldly. The very fact he was entrusted with such assignments indicates Paul's confidence in his spiritual maturity, leadership, dependability, & his love for those he shepherded. This duty to build churches in Crete that could effectively evangelize the island demonstrates Titus's commitment to reach the unconverted with the gospel.

Do you get the feeling that Titus was important to Paul & his ministry to churches? It even goes deeper than that as Titus was a theological test case that Paul brought to the Jerusalem council in Acts 15. Titus was an example of what the Lord was doing in bringing Gentiles to Himself. Turn to Acts 15 (1-12). Although Titus isn't mentioned by name, he was there.

Some men came down from Judea & *began* teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." & when Paul & Barnabas had great dissension & debate with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul & Barnabas & some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles & elders concerning this issue. Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia & Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, & were bringing great joy to all the brethren. When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church & the apostles & the elders, & they reported all that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them & to direct them to observe the Law of Moses." The apostles & the elders came together to look into this matter. After there had been much debate, Peter stood up & said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel & believe. "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; & He made no distinction between us & them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are." All the people kept silent, & they were listening to Barnabas & Paul as they were relating what signs & wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

This is the critical doctrinal event in the early church & it had to do with salvation by grace alone through faith alone versus the legalists & those who required circumcision & the keeping of the law. Who was it that Paul & Barnabas brought with them to Jerusalem (2)? We find the answer in Gal 2 (1-5, 9).

Then after an interval of 14 years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. It was because of a revelation that I went up; & I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but *I did so* in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. But *it was* because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.

But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you...

9 & recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James & Cephas & John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me & Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we *might go* to the Gentiles & they to the circumcised...

On this visit to Jerusalem some Jewish Christians insisted that Gentiles like Titus be circumcised, Paul, aware of the precedent this would set of adding works to faith for salvation, refused to comply. He provided a test case, the Gentile Titus who wasn't compelled to be circumcised. It was a touchy subject, a difficult situation & Titus was in the middle of it. So Titus was an early convert & he became a fellow worker & assistant to Paul in his missionary work. Paul could say, **Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you** (2 Cor 8:23). Titus was one of Paul's companions in whom he placed a considerable amount of trust. He was his trouble-shooter in difficult situations. Titus must have been a mature believer who had Paul's confidence & a great deal of experience dealing with delicate & difficult situations. He wasn't the naive & weak youngster that Timothy was. He was firm, carried authority, & yet had a heart for other Christians, even those who had a long way to go in their sanctification. Titus was just the man for dealing with the difficult situation of Crete.

To summarize, Titus accompanied Paul & Barnabas to Jerusalem to attend the Council of Jerusalem, during which the issue of Judaizing was settled once & for all (Acts 15; Gal 2:1-3). Titus was Paul's model of a born-again, Spirit-filled Gentile convert, who had no need to identify himself with religious Judaism, either through circumcision or obedience to the Law of Moses (Gal 2:3-5). Titus, therefore, was well acquainted with the arguments of the Judaizers he was to deal with on Crete (Titus 1:10, 14). He understood the apostles' position on & arguments against that false gospel. Because Titus had been associated with Paul for many years before beginning his ministry on Crete, it's unlikely any of the doctrines & standards mentioned in this letter were new to him. As we've seen, he'd spent a year or so with Paul ministering to the church at Corinth, the classic problem church of NT times. He was twice in charge of gathering a collection from that church for poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:6, 22-24). He later returned to continue the ministry there at Paul's request, delivering the apostle's 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to them (2 Cor 8:16-19). He



knew firsthand the trials & disappointments of leading a group of believers who were immature, selfish, & worldly. The very fact he was entrusted with such assignments indicates Paul's great confidence in his spiritual maturity, leadership, dependability, & genuine love for those he shepherded.<sup>6</sup> But just having respect from men or even a great resume wouldn't be enough for Titus to minister successfully in Crete. Look at Titus 1:4: **To Titus...Grace & peace from God the Father & Christ Jesus our Savior. Grace** is the wondrous gift of God that brings salvation & **peace** is the wondrous blessing that He bestows on those whom He graciously saves. For that reason the phrase **grace & peace** became a common greeting among early Christians. When Paul writes to Christians, **grace to you**, or something similar, we realize they already have *saving grace* so this must be a prayer for *sustaining grace*. In the context of this letter, Paul's mention of **grace** also has some bearing on the legalists who were distorting & denying **grace**. God's **grace** would be necessary for Titus personally & for the churches in Crete so the error of the legalists could be counteracted. **Peace** here is the NT equivalent of the Hebrew, *shalom*, the Jewish greeting & wish of well-being. It's not the absence of all difficulties but a spiritual & inner harmony & calm that's the result of God's working in the heart & life. Phil 4:6-7 says, **Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer & supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. & (as you do this, what?) the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts & your minds in Christ Jesus.** Biblical **peace** is only possible after God's **grace** has been received & it's fitting that it's always **grace & peace**, in that order. Unbelievers are naturally enemies of God & it's only by God's saving **grace** that we can be at **peace** with God. & the **peace** expressed by Paul here includes **peace** for any difficulty of life. Titus 1:4 goes on to say this **grace & peace** is **from God the Father**, which reminds us that both only come from God. There is no **peace**, true **peace**, outside of God's **grace**. & both God the Father & God the Son are paralleled here as **Savior. Jesus our Savior** in vs 4 is used interchangeably with **God our Savior** in vs 3. This is a high view of Christ & His deity & that belief is the foundation of Titus' ministry among false teachers in Crete who would downplay our Lord's deity. It's as if Paul anticipates the theological arguments that undergird

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<sup>6</sup> John MacArthur, *Titus*, pp

his exhortations in chpts 2-3, in which Christ as Savior is at the center (2:13; 3:6) as the One through whom God's **grace** has come to save us & to instruct & enable us in living godly & peaceful lives.<sup>7</sup> The Roman Emperor who ruled Crete & the known world might refer to himself with this same title **Savior** but the people of this island needed to remember there's only true Savior. We need to remember that as well God says in Is 43:11, **I am the LORD & there is no savior besides me**. If there's no Savior besides Jehovah, & Jesus is Savior, then Jesus is Jehovah. In light of the historical context of Crete, these words have deep meaning. Paul isn't just giving Titus a standard greeting to say *hi* or be polite & he's not just throwing out Christian clichés or slogans. Titus would need this **peace from God the Father** that Paul mentions. He needed divine **peace** to preserve & protect him when stability was needed among those disturbing the peace of the churches. Are we still in need of God's **grace & peace**? You better believe it! For the person who says, *My sins are too large & have lasted too long for God to forgive*, we must say, *But His grace is great*. For the soul that despairs in the face of personal weakness & says, *I'm not able to measure up to God's requirements*, we respond, *God doesn't save you on the basis of your ability but bestows His grace by His mercy alone*. For the tormented realist who says, *I can resist temptation for a while, but I can't maintain my resolve*, we offer the assurance, *But His grace is forever*. For the timid who fear, *I won't fit in*, we share Christ's embrace, saying, *The grace of God our Father unites you to our family*.<sup>8</sup> How can any Christian handle a difficult situation like Titus was in? How can we face an uncertain future, a global pandemic, a divisive political arena, rebuilding after fires, or being witnesses of Christ in a hostile world? The **grace** Paul mentions isn't merely a word or a wish, but **grace** from God is the only way Titus could do what God called him to. & it's the only way we can do what He's called us to do. This is a reminder that God's **grace** isn't only essential but is also sufficient for whatever circumstances God has for us. As Christians, we all appreciate saving **grace**. But I don't know if we think enough of daily **grace** or sustaining **grace**. God's **grace** not only gets believers out of hell but His **grace** is what gets us out of bed each day & allows us to do His will

<sup>7</sup> George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, p 286

<sup>8</sup> R. Kent Hughes & Bryan Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy & Titus: To Guard the Deposit*, Preaching the Word, p 279

every step of the way. As John Newton wrote, *'tis grace hath brought me safe thus far & what? grace will lead me home.* That's trusting in daily & future grace.

May we all have the same zeal for the Lord that Titus showed. Every one of us would do well to model his commitment to truth, fervor in spreading the gospel, & enthusiastic love for the church. We often think of the expression of grace & peace as a NT expression, but Num 6 presents it well & I close with this benediction from Num 6:22-26, **Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron & to his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them: The Lord bless you, & keep you; The Lord make His face shine on you, & be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance on you, & give you peace.'** PRAY