

Titus 1 • That they may be sound in the faith

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We're going to be starting a new study in the book of Titus this morning. So, when you get your Bible, or have it with you, open it up to the book of Titus right after first and second Timothy. And we're going to make our way through this fairly short study and we're going to get through a whole chapter here this morning. Can you believe it? It's only 16 verses.

And some of this is even kind of a review. Those of you that were with us through first and second Timothy, you're going to hear some repeat because Timothy and Titus had very similar tasks as it relates to their ministry that they had from the Apostle Paul to set up and establish the local church or churches in whatever area they were serving in.

You'll remember that Titus, excuse me, Timothy was in Ephesus where he was ministering and helping to establish the church, and Titus is in a different location, which we'll learn about here this morning. Look with me beginning in verse 1. We'll read through the chapter and then we'll pray. It says:

¹ Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, ² in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began¹ ³ and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior;

⁴ To Titus, my true child in a common faith:

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

⁵ This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— ⁶ if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷ For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firm to the

trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

¹⁰ For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.¹¹ They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. ¹² One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."¹³ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. ¹⁵ To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. ¹⁶ They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.(ESV)

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we start off this study of the book of Titus this morning we pray, Lord, that your Holy Spirit would enlighten our hearts to really understand what's being said here.

Let the ministry of your spirit flow freely among us today, and we really want to hear from you. We want to hear what you have to say to us from your words. So, Lord, speak that your servants may hear, strengthen, and encourage us, we ask it in Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

We begin this morning with this letter from the Apostle Paul to a man named Titus, who like Timothy was a coworker of the Apostle Paul's who had traveled with Paul. Often these guys were left in areas where Paul had been. He went and shared the gospel and started fellowships in areas, and then he would move on, and he would leave his young men in charge to kind of set up an established leadership wherever they happened to be. Which is a really a great system. That way Paul could move on to the next area and so forth.

But we don't know that much about this young man named Titus. Really, we have to kind of piece together little snippets of information from Paul's letters. I think he only mentions Titus something like three times elsewhere. And really all we know is that he was a Greek and he probably came to the Lord through Paul's ministry since you noticed as we read that Paul refers to him as my true son in the common faith.

That was a spiritual term, not a biological one. So, he begins this letter as letters began back then with the name of the sender, Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ and so forth. It goes on in one of Paul's classic kind of run on sentences, but he refers to himself as a servant of God.

And I honestly don't prefer the way the ESV has translated this. The New King James says a "bond servant of God." And that's really closer to the Greek because the Greek word here is *dolos*. We've mentioned it many times, and it is truly a bond servant or a bond slave.

Now, that doesn't mean anything in our culture today, but in that culture, people were servants or slaves not because they'd been dominated, usually militarily. Don't think of slavery as slavery existed in our country. Slaves back in biblical times were often in that position because they had gotten themselves into debt and so they were working off their debt. They would be sold as a slave and the money from the sale would go to pay off the debt, and then they'd work to pay that money back to the person who bought them.

You were working off a debt in most cases, and when the debt was finished you were free to go. Free to go and work for yourself and so on and so forth. Well, there was a clause that God had put into the Mosaic law saying that if you liked your master, and if you kind of determined that he's a great guy, he's a godly man, and he treats me well, then you could choose to be his servant or slave for life.

That is what a *dolos* was. And they would take the servant to the city gate, and they would pierce his ear. And that was a symbol of his choosing to become a lifelong servant or slave of his master because he loved his master so much. Well, what's important about this explanation is that this is the way Paul the Apostle saw his ministry to the Lord Jesus. He said, I am a lifelong willing servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am his *dolos*. And that was his attitude, that was his heart toward his relationship with the Lord.

So, as he goes on and speaks of his apostleship and his ministry notice there in verse 1, he says that I'm an apostle. Why? He says, for the sake of the faith of God's people, God's elect. That's why I am an apostle. I'm here for the sake of their faith. And what he's describing really is the ministry of a teacher, a pastor, teacher. That's why we do what we do. It's for the sake of your faith.

My goal, my number one goal. Whenever I get up to teach God's word is that your faith might be encouraged and built up. I want you to walk out of this place with your faith encouraged. I want you to know that you have heard from the Lord that you've spent time at his throne, and you walk out of here saying, "You know what? I'm better off than when I first came in." That's my goal. That's my heart.

That was Paul's heart. And he says also that they might have a knowledge of the truth. Did you see that also in that verse? I want to build up their faith and I want to give them a knowledge of the truth. Because truth has a very powerful impact on our lives, whereas deception also has a very powerful impact.

People, can I just tell you something? We are living in unprecedented times from the standpoint that darkness and deception have swept over our world, and as it continues to sweep over our world. What does it bring? It brings bondage. Okay, so deception and untruth always bring bondage. What does truth do?

Well, Jesus said, in John, chapter 8 on the screen John chapter 8, verse 32.

John 8:32 (ESV)

“...you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Don't you like that? I want to be free. I want to have that liberty, right? And that is what we get when we experience the truth of God's word. And as a pastor and as a teacher, I want to build up your faith and I want to expose you to God's truth. It's not my truth. It's not your truth, it's His truth because it sets people free.

Next in his letter, you skip down to verse 4. He gives the recipient of the letter, he says “*to Titus, my true child in the common faith, grace and peace...*” Notice this not just from God the Father, but also from Christ Jesus our Savior. Did you notice how Paul linked God, the Father, and Jesus as the source of grace and peace. You need to understand that is an implication of equality right there in the word of God. To say that they are the source, God the Father, Jesus Christ, the source of grace and peace. And it's unquestionable.

Verse 5, he goes on, and this is where we find out where Titus is. He says, this is why I left you in Crete. And then he talks about what he was left there to do, which was to appoint elders in all of the towns as he was directed. So, Crete, where is Crete? Let me show you. This is a current Google map and I've circled the island.



Crete is the fifth largest island in the Mediterranean. It has an area of over 5,000 miles and it has a coast that stretches for about 650 miles. And that was where Titus was, left there by the Apostle Paul, so that he might appoint elders in all of the towns, plural. This tells you that there were churches probably in each of those towns, and Titus was probably traveling around the island, going from place to place and helping to set up leadership.

Now I want to remind you of something that we covered in our study of first and second Timothy. We made the point that elder, overseer and pastor are biblically synonymous terms. They are used interchangeably in the New Testament. We, the church, have divided them. Okay. But we've done it apart from Biblical revelation.

So, you've got elder, pastor, which is the same thing as shepherd, and overseer used synonymously and Paul's going to use two of the terms. He says, Titus, I've left you there so that you can raise up elders. But then he's going to call them overseers in just a moment because that's also a function of their calling and so forth.

So, this is what Titus was there doing in Crete. And he begins to lay out the requirements for appointing elders in the churches. In verse 6, he says, I want you to raise up these men to be elders as long as they're living lives that are above reproach. They're the husband of one wife.

We talked about what those terms mean in our study of first and second Timothy. To be above reproach simply means to not be liable to accusation. To be the husband of one wife means to be dedicated and devoted to his wife. It's talking about that one-woman man, he is devoted. She is his heart and so forth.

And also, he said that his children are not open to the charge of debauchery. We don't use the word debauchery today, but it speaks of a lifestyle. We're living debauchery in the world. I mean, you can see it all over. We just don't use the word. The word means to live for pleasure. To live for sensual pleasure.

Everything you do is focused on how it feels. If it feels good, right? Run after it, do it, and so forth. That's debauchery. And Paul says that a man who is brought into a position of leadership, his children must not be living life in that sort of a way. And they need to be themselves, believers, and so forth.

He continues with requirements in verse 7. Here he does switch to overseer using that title, repeating once again that these men are God's stewards and must be above reproach. That's an important word. A steward is someone who is given something that belongs to somebody else, but he's given that to use on behalf of the other person.

So, a pastor, elder, overseer is a steward, right? So, the Lord gives those ministries, He gives gifts and abilities and so forth to those church leaders, but they're not the owners of those things. They're just the stewards of them. And so, he says, as a steward, he must be above reproach.

And that's a repeat. Paul says, *“He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain,⁸ but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.⁹ He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, (He can't be constantly injecting his own ideas or his own thoughts. He has to hold to the word as it is written.) so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.(ESV)*

These are just more of the characteristics and qualifications of a pastor, elder, overseer. We see here that part of his job is not just to share the word, to share the truth of God's word, but also to rebuke those who contradict it. Doesn't that sound like a fun ministry? Yeah, “I have the Ministry of Rebuking.” Well, nobody would ever go around saying that. The point is, it's part of what a pastor sometimes has to do.

In fact, it's even part of something that a Bible study leader has to do. If you take on people in your home, you say, oh yeah, I want to start inviting some folks over to the house, and we're just going to start going through the word together. And you're the leader of this Bible study group. Listen, if somebody comes to your Bible study and they start saying things that are just whacked out, you got to say something.

Because you may have people in your Bible study that are young in the faith and they don't know any different. For all they know what this guy just got done saying was absolutely true, if you don't say anything about it. But that puts people in a very awkward situation because, most people would rather suffer physical death than contradict or to confront other people.

Do you know that? That's one of the biggest fears that people have in life. It's like, "I don't like to confront anybody about anything. I just kind of go, oh, that's interesting." And that's frankly the way most people respond, it's hard. It's hard to look somebody in the eye after they've shared something that's just really off base and then to say, well, actually that's not true.

I remember being rebuked as a young Christian saying stupid things. And some people were better at it than others, I'll tell you right now. But I remember saying things, like, "Well, like it says God helps those who help themselves." I thought it was in the Bible. So, I went around quoting it and finally one guy said to me, "That's not in the Bible."

I was like, "Really?" I didn't know better. But boy, I was so glad that he corrected me, because you start to just say things off the top of your head. So, a part of what a pastor has to do is to be able to rebuke which means to reprimand or even to scold and that's not very fun.

And here he gives in verse 10, the reason why that has to happen. Look at verse 10. He says, "¹⁰ *for there are many who are insubordinate.*" No, that's just the fact of the matter. They're "*empty talkers.*" And in fact, some of them are even "*deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.*"

The circumcision party was a group of legalistic Jews who had determined that the only way that a Gentile could be saved is for them first to become a Jew. Because they went around telling people, Jesus was a Jew. So, you say you believe in Jesus and what He did on the cross, fine. He was a Jew, right? And He came to save the Jews.

So, you see if you want to be saved, you have to become a Jew. And the covenant sign of the Jews is circumcision. So, you have to become a Jew first, then you can be saved. And you know what? To a lot of people, it made sense. It was just close enough to what things kind of said that a lot of people were sucked into it.

And that's why Paul says in verse 11, look with me in your Bible, he says, *"¹¹ They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach."* He doesn't elaborate on what that shameful gain was, but whatever it was, Paul considered it shameful. He goes on, and this is interesting, verse 12, he says, one of the Cretans, a prophet of their own said, and he says this about his own people.

And by the way, a Cretan is a resident of Crete. The island of Crete. Okay, so he says, *"¹² One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."'* You've got to wonder how popular that guy was with his own people. But apparently, this was something that Paul considered, after spending some time there, to be true.

Because you'll notice he goes on in verse 13 to say, *"this testimony is in fact true."* These people are really a piece of work. He says, therefore, you may end up, Titus, having to rebuke these people. And if you have to, *"rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth."*(ESV)

And so, what we learned from this is that Titus was ministering the word of God in a very morally challenged part of the world at that time. What's that remind you of? Yeah. The United States of America in this day. Because it can be very daunting, can't it?

When we see today someone coming to Christ, it kind of depends on how old they are. The older a person is when they come to the Lord, the more challenging it can become because they've spent more time in the world taking on the characteristics and the behavior and the responses of the world. And those can create some very deep ruts in their life that can cause them to find it very challenging to begin to live the life of Christ, which we are called to live.

It's wonderful when you can bring somebody to the Lord when they're at a very early age before they've really been inundated with the things of the world. You guys know how ruts can stick around for a long time, right? I mean, just go down to Vail and just check out the ruts from the Oregon Trail.

How long has it been since they've been taking wagons on the Oregon Trail? A long time. Those ruts are still there. And I know a lot of people who have some really deep ruts in their life, and it can be very challenging. Not to say impossible but challenging. And the reason is that our culture has veered so far from a biblical mindset.

You know that what the Bible teaches is now not only not accepted, it's so radically different from the way the world, the unbelieving world is. But you guys need to understand something, I don't consider myself super old, but in just my lifetime it wasn't that way when I was a little boy. I'm talking about unbelievers, when I was a little boy, acted better than many people who are Christians today.

That's right. And it was kind of a different world. I remember when I was in the third grade. I remember my teacher's name. It was Mrs. McGuire. I think she was about 165 at the time, at least she looked it. But you know what? She was a believer, and she kept a Bible on her desk the entire year that I was in school in the third grade.

A Holy Bible sitting right there. And I remember because I'd have to go up and ask questions with my stuff, my work or whatever. I'd see that Bible sitting in the corner of her desk. That's the way it was just, 55 years ago or something like that. When I was a little boy, living together outside of marriage was considered immoral, unhealthy, and wrong.

We strongly believed in the sanctity of life when I was a young boy. I'm talking even among unbelievers. There was a very strong belief in the sanctity of life. There was a deep respect for our nation, our constitution. People would go to war and give their lives gladly on the battlefield to support their country.

They believed that things like marijuana and other drugs were dangerous and illegal. They respected those who were in law enforcement and honored those individuals. And they would've considered it pure fantasy to entertain the idea that there are more than two genders. That was just when I was a boy. So, what has happened between when I was a boy and now I've grown up?

Well, how long do you think a teacher would last in the public school system with a Bible on her desk? A day, less than a day before she was removed. It just, it wouldn't be tolerated. Today, living together outside of marriage is considered a good idea and has been normalized. We think also it's no small thing at all, we don't even blink about the idea of euthanizing our unborn or our elderly. It's just really not a big deal.

We daily see people showing utter contempt and hatred for our nation. We see our constitution here in the United States ignored altogether by people who are in charge. We have normalized and legalized the sale of drugs and other things.

Law enforcement is generally disrespected. You've heard all the “Defund the Police movements” that are going on around the country, and the belief in multiple genders is considered an established fact. Things have changed. Things have changed.

I remember when I was in the second grade, I got paddled in front of the whole class and it didn't kill me, and I deserved it. Yeah, it was kind of humiliating, but I deserved it. I'm talking in front of the whole class. It's funny, I don't remember that teacher's name. I think I've tried to forget. She was only about 125 at the time.

But things have changed so much that what God said through the prophet Isaiah about Israel has now become very true about the United States of America.

Isaiah 59:14 (NIV)

...justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance, truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter.

It's a different world we're living in. What is, what am I saying all this for? I'm reminding you that the very environment that Titus was thrust into to share the gospel and minister the Word is the same world that we're living in today, and we have to be prepared for it. This isn't Mayberry anymore. It's a different world.

We need to go into it understanding that there are times when we have to stand for the truth with strength, not arrogance, but with strength, and say, “That's wrong. That's not what the Bible teaches.”

And then Paul writes this in verse 15, he says, “*To the pure, all things are pure,*(I love this statement. He's not saying that even sin is pure in the eyes of the pure) *but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.*

Paul is saying that when somebody has a pure heart and they've allowed the Lord to do a work in their heart, by allowing the light of His word and truth to permeate their lives, it's going to begin to affect the way they look at the world and other people.

Have you noticed those of you who came to Christ and allowed His Word into your heart, have you noticed how it changed your viewpoint? It changed how you see other people. It changed how you see their mistakes. It changed everything. It changes your whole view. It changes how you look at the clouds or what's going on in the world.

It just changes things in our hearts. When we allow the light of Christ to enter our life, we begin to look through that light. And if you're looking at life and it just looks really rotten right now, you probably need to fill up your heart more with the Word of God.

Because you see the converse is also true. When we allow the corruption and the evil and the darkness of the world to really begin to permeate our hearts, even as believers, we will start to look at the world through that lens as well, and things will look dark, and things will look hopeless. And if there's ever a people on the face of the earth that should never experience hopelessness, it's us.

I mean, we have every reason to be hopeful because of what our God has done and who he is. Jesus talked about this in a rather interesting and mysterious statement recorded in Matthew.

Matthew 6:22-23(ESV)

The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

The eye is the lamp of the body (Jesus is using symbols here to say, if your eye is healthy, and what that means is you're letting the light of God's word into your heart). *So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad,* (and what that means is you're only seeing the darkness,) *your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*

And this is just a constant reminder. And this is the reason I had to stop watching the news at some point in my life, I had to stop. I was letting too much darkness in, and it was affecting me and my whole inside became dark. And I could feel it, and it was distressing me. I mean, I just had to stop. I had to say, you know what, whatever time I was spending reading the news or watching the news, I'm going to just have to fill up on your Word, God, and just remind myself, you're in charge. You're sovereign. You are the Lord. You are good. Your heart is pure. You are holy. And that's what I need to fill my life with.

And then one of the last things Paul says here in verse 16, if you look with me there in your Bible, he talks about these people who've just been so corrupted by the darkness. *“¹⁶ They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.”*(ESV)

He says, but they actually deny that they know God by their actions. Isn't that what he says? I mean, he used a slightly different wording. He says they deny Him by their works. Do you remember what Jesus said about how we are to recognize false prophets who come among us? He says, you will know them by their fruit, right? (Matthew 7:20)

Well, that's true of all people, not just false prophets. You'll know them by their fruit. So, he's giving us a reminder here that it's not what somebody says that's important. What somebody says, who cares? Who cares? Yeah. I'm a Christian, I can recite the books of the Bible. I have several passages of the Bible committed to memory. I know all that stuff. I don't care. It doesn't mean anything. It's not what somebody says. It's how they live. How they live. That's what Paul is saying. That's what Jesus said by their fruit you will recognize them.

That's what we need to understand is a reality, so that we will walk in greater discernment toward the people that we interact with in the world who may be quick to profess a knowledge or understanding of Christianity or even a relationship with God. But the big question is, when you see their lives, what do you see? Because your life preaches louder than your words. Do you see a transformed life?

That doesn't mean they're perfect. It doesn't mean you're perfect. It means you're walking in that direction. You're walking toward Jesus. Amen.

Let's stand together. Chapter one of Titus. We'll move on to chapter two, Lord willing, next time.

We're going to have some people up here to pray with you. If you need prayer this morning, please feel free to come up.

Father, thank you so much for your Word today. Your Word is true and we know God, that the truth of your Word brings freedom into our lives. And we need that freedom because we're living in a world today, Lord, where there's much slavery, much bondage. And Lord, we don't want any part of that. We want to live like free people.

But so many of us, Lord, we just need to confess to you we've opened our heart to the lies and the deceptions and the darkness that this world communicates. And sometimes even as believers, we've taken on bondage. We confess it to you Lord, and we ask you to forgive us, and we pray that you'd set us free because you are the truth. You don't just have the truth. You are the truth, and we want you in our lives. Fill us, God, with your light so that others may see that light in us and be drawn to you. We thank you and praise you. In Jesus' precious name and all God's people said, amen.

God bless you. Have a good rest of your Sunday.