

Paul's Letter To Titus
Week One
Titus 1:1-16

Day One

¹Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness— ²a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, ³and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,

1:1 – Paul identified himself as an apostle, not as a title but as a function. **Do you see the difference?** A title is something you hold, a function is something you do. There are no titles in the kingdom of God, only roles and functions. We are all brothers and sisters, differentiated by gifts but not by status or hierarchy. What's more, Paul had this function by God's will and for the benefit of God's people. Paul was an apostle for faith in and knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness. **Do you see the purpose in all this?** Paul was someone who was going somewhere and taking people with him in God's will. **Who are you in Him and what you are doing that impacts others for good? Do you know?**

Paul did not choose this role or effect. God assigned them to him. Yet notice how clear Paul was and how easily he could write about who he was. **Do you have that same ease? Or do you stumble and struggle to describe who you are and what you do in this world?** Ultimately you are a servant of God, just like Paul, in whatever you do and whoever you are.

v. 2 – Paul described further the knowledge and faith that he distributed: they rested on eternal life, which God promised “before the beginning of time.” **When did God promise this eternal life?** We can look in Genesis and see the seeds of His good news of life right after man's' fall.

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

This promise of help to fallen man was a promise to restore the eternal life lost through the Fall of Adam and Eve. Old Testament believers put their trust in that promise and were saved!

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith (Hebrews 4:1-2).

They had the gospel preached to them in the Old Testament just like we have. God does not lie and there is no other name under heaven by which men can be saved other than Jesus, so these Old Testament believers somehow heard about God's promise of eternal life in Christ before He was ever born. That is the power of God and of faith in Him and His Word.

v. 3 – Paul saw his work as a fulfillment of God's promise in Genesis 3:15! Paul connected his work to a firm historical foundation and did not see it as something new, but rather a fulfillment of the promise God made in Genesis, before time as we know it began. This explains what Jesus did in the days between His death and resurrection. He was setting the captives free who were held until the fullness of His revealed life and work:

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? (Ephesians 4:7-9).

Day Two

⁴To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. ⁵The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.

v. 4 – Paul had a close relationship with Titus but we don't know much about Titus – who he was, where he came from and how he developed his relationship with Paul. We know that he was useful to Paul as a problem-solver and Paul used him on occasions to go to churches to iron out difficulties:

As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ (2 Corinthians 8:23).

Paul wrote to Timothy and to Titus. Perhaps he wrote to others, but the Holy Spirit did not preserve those letters for us. At any rate, Paul's relationship with both Timothy and Titus was mixed with the work of the ministry. They were joined not just as friends and brothers, but also as co-laborers for Christ.

I thank God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men (2 Corinthians 8:16-21).

Who are you joined to in your work for the Lord? With whom do you have a close association? How can you strengthen your bonds of love so that your work may be even more productive and fruitful? I would think that both Timothy and Titus complemented Paul's work with their disposition, personality and gifts. That is how you build an effective team – everyone contributes their strengths and complements one another's weaknesses. **What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? What do you contribute to your team?**

Notice that Paul wished Titus "grace and peace" That wasn't just a religious slogan; Paul wanted Titus to have those things in his life and have them in abundance. Of course Paul realized that those are only available from God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ.

v. 5 – Paul and Titus had been in Crete together, and Paul decided to leave Titus there to complete the work they had begun in establishing the church there. Paul left Titus there; that means that Titus had no plans of his own. He was flexible and was at Paul's disposal to use and direct as he saw fit. That speaks to Titus's commitment to the Lord and the cause of the Kingdom.

The final step in the church planting process was to appoint elders. This would obviously take more time, since each man would have to be evaluated for his spiritual progress and fruit. You cannot rush spiritual growth or maturity. They can only happen over time.

Day Three

⁶An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. ⁷Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

v. 6 – Paul had left Titus behind in Crete to set things in order, which included appointing elders to govern and oversee the church. Because this was an important job, the standards were high for those who would serve. Yet the churches were young, so these men (and they were always men) had to exhibit these traits over time – they could not be rushed to serve. I am sure, however, that some older men who were young in the faith had to be chosen due to the infancy of the churches.

The first thing that Paul mentioned was order in an elder's home. He did not list knowledge of Scripture or ability to preach and teach. He asked Titus to consider the condition of the man's home, wife and children. God's ways to promotion and service are not always our ways. Paul's reasoning was simple: **If a man cannot manage his own home, how can he be expected to manage the church of Jesus?**

v. 7 – An elder is entrusted with God's work. What an awesome task that is! First, the elder did not build or start the work of God; it was started by Christ and established

through His apostles. It is God's work and an elder was and is expected to do the work with integrity and excellence, approaching it as he would approach anything that belongs to God. The qualifications for an elder were and are mostly character traits and not seminary training. The latter is not bad, but how many well-educated church leaders do we have who are poor leaders because they lack character formation. I always tell leaders that they can buy or rent information from a consultant, but they cannot buy character formation. That can only happen as a leader cooperates with what God is doing in his or her life to shape that person into a leader with integrity!

This verse has a few "nots" – what a leader in the church is not to be and it covers issues like power, temper, temperance and money. Those are issues not only to be faced and overcome by church leaders, but by Christian leaders no matter where they lead and serve.

v. 8 – Paul then listed some "do's" for church leaders. They must share, live open lives, and be disciplined in all their behavior and relationships. Paul also outlined a list of requirements in his first letter to Timothy. Why not look at both lists and evaluate yourself in each of the areas mentioned as important for leadership?

Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

Day Four

⁹He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. ¹⁰For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group.

v. 9 – Paul and the apostles had painstakingly laid out the message of the gospel and they expected everyone to follow what they had delivered. The apostles had passed on what they received from Jesus, so they knew what they were talking about as they planted churches and spread the gospel. They did not tolerate any deviation from their message. What's more, we have the same message today. **Do you feel the burden of being true to the apostles' mission and receiving and then passing on their message as they delivered it?**

This was important to Paul, for he mentioned it in his letter to Timothy as well:

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others (2 Timothy 2:2).

Yet we know that men arose in the church who attempted to draw disciples after themselves (see Paul's address to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20). **How could or can they do this?** They could add to the message of the apostles, claiming to have new revelation or insight. This is the issue that John faced when he wrote his epistles. Some had left the church, claiming new insight from God as to who Jesus was and what He had come to do. That is ridiculous! **Who would have had better insight than the apostles? Whose word was and is to be trusted: Those who were with Jesus or those who claim to have received something from an angel or the Spirit?**

This is why the study of God's word is so important. It contains the record of those who were with Him, and is to be studied and taught.

v. 10 – Paul testified to the fact that there were many rebels and imposters who were teaching that believers had to follow the Law of Moses and be circumcised. Paul labeled them deceivers and talkers. There are many good talkers in and around the church. Yet one's spirituality is not based on talk but on deeds that emanate from loyalty to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul was none too kind to those who fell into that category:
Galatians

Don't let yourself become a talker, for as the saying goes, "Talk is cheap!" Make sure you live up to what you say and try to walk out what you indicate is most important to you.

Day Five

¹¹They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. ¹²Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons."

v. 11 – Paul was not tolerant of anyone who did not adhere to the teaching that emanating from his ministry, for he knew that what he had received from the Lord Himself. Today Paul would be portrayed as intolerant, perhaps the worst label that tolerant moderns can put on anyone! Paul wrote that those of the "circumcision party" should shut up or be shut up.

Those false teachers were ruining entire families. That shows you the power of good or bad teaching. This is why teachers incur a stricter judgment as James wrote in his letter:

Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check (James 4:1-2).

What's more, these false teachers had a hidden agenda – they were after dishonest gain. There is another saying that says, “Follow the money.” When you followed the money in Paul's day, it led to those false teachers. This is not the only time Paul encountered those who were profiteering from perverting the gospel:

Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God (2 Corinthians 2:17)

v. 12 – Paul was referring to those who were in Crete where he had left Titus to set things in order. One of the Cretan prophets had given testimony about his own people. His testimony indicated that his people were not a noble group, but had their cultural tendencies that only furthered the problem that Paul saw. These Cretan false prophets had found a financial way to benefit from their erroneous interpretation of the gospel.

Usually I resist any type of cultural stereotype, for there is no way that such a belief can be accurate for all – or so I thought. But Paul here indicted Cretans in general and showed how a cultural flaw could impact the work of the gospel. When you think of it, every culture would have a flaw or flaws, because every culture has emerged from sinful men working together to build cultural norms, habits and behaviors. The gospel came not only to change individuals, but also to change sinful cultural behaviors.

This is why each believer must look to be transformed, for there are powerful internal and external forces that work to keep a believer from being conformed to the image of Christ. Ask the Lord to show you where your culture may have shaped or be shaping your attitudes, thinking or behavior in a way that is contrary to the culture of the Gospel.

Day Six

¹³This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith ¹⁴and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth.

v. 13 – Paul wrote that the testimony of a Cretan prophet found in verse 12 was true! The Cretans tended to be evil, lazy liars. Paul instructed Titus not to ignore these traits but to confront them so that the grace of God could change those who had them. The goal was not just producing nicer people, but rather that they would be sound in the faith. Paul always kept his eye on the end result and for him that result was perhaps best described in Colossians:

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me (Colossians 1:28-29).

Are you sound in your faith? How do you know? What evidence can you produce to back up your assessment?

Paul instructed Titus to rebuke sharply and publicly those who were out of line and acting like typical Cretans. The goal was not just to produce nice people, but solid believers, true to faith in Christ. The believers had not come to a feel-good club but rather to the church of the living God! They were not free to act and believe as they chose and Titus, as their leader, was to be a good shepherd and protect and help to spiritually develop the flock.

v. 14 – Paul referred to the false teaching about following the Law of Moses as a Jewish myth. That means that those who followed their teaching were “myth-taken.” Just because something sounds spiritual does not mean that it is spiritual. The only way to know is to know God’s word. Even there, people can twist God’s word to coincide their whimsical teaching. So one must know the Word and rely on the Spirit who inspired the Word. One must also have some basic understanding of the rules for interpreting the Bible, which aren’t that difficult.

The Bible interprets itself. The Word is all about Jesus, His predicted coming and then His impact once here. The Bible is not always to be taken literally (“If your hand sins, cut it off” – is not to be taken seriously but is a warning to deal ruthlessly with sin in your life), it is not a history book but contains historical information, and must be interpreted with some thought given to what it would have meant to those who first received it. That is an oversimplified list, but it’s a good start. What would you add?

Day Seven

¹⁵To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. ¹⁶They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

v. 15 – Paul indicated in this verse that the root of all the doctrinal problems was lack of faith. Those who were of the circumcision party, as he called them, were corrupted because of their perverted view of Christ’s mission and the nature of the Gospel. They did not want to trust Jesus for their standing with God, but wanted to do something to earn or maintain it. Paul went further to say that not only their minds were corrupted but also their consciences. This doctrinal distortion was a major problem to Paul. I say that because doctrinal distortions today are not that big of a crisis due to the proliferation of denominations, publishing, and independent, personal studies of Scripture that lead to creative interpretations.

Yet Paul’s discernment caused him to see just how big of a threat the Judaizers (those who maintained that Christians had to follow the Law of Moses) were to the nature of Paul’s message of faith in Christ that is for both Jews and Gentiles. The casual reader can see in Galatians that Paul was passionately opposed to those who appeared to be believers but who held to the need for circumcision.

You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves (Galatians 5:7-12).

I pray regularly, *"Lord, keep me from doctrinal weirdness. Don't let me wander into areas where I should not be. Don't let me major in minor things and help me to communicate important truths to your people, truths that will bring them closer to You and increase their productivity as they serve You."* **Will you join me in that prayer?**

Yet it cannot only be prayer. I must work to help make that happen. That is why I went back to school at the age of 57 and will finish when I am 60. I chose a program that was Word-based so that I could spend some intense and meaningful time studying God's word. I also write studies like this every day so that I am in the Word and disseminating my work to others, free of charge.

v. 16 – There were and are some who claim to know God, but in reality do not. Even Jesus acknowledged this when He said:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

That is another personal prayer: *"Lord, keep me from deception. I don't want to claim to be something I am not. I don't want to assume I am at a lofty place, when really I am mired in the clay of delusion. Amen."*

Paul referred to the actions of these so-called believers as proof that there were anything but believers. Their actions did not coincide with their words, as Jesus again warned would happen:

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them" (Matthew 7:15-20).

So is your behavior inconsistent with your beliefs? Are you at least honest about that gap? It is more dangerous to deny that the discrepancy exists than to understand that we all tend to function below what we believe and speak.