

## **An Introduction to Titus: Good Doctrine and Good Deeds**

### **Titus 1:1-4**

I have the privilege of kicking off our new series through Titus this morning, which is one of Paul's letters found in the New Testament. So go ahead and grab your Bible and turn with me to Titus 1 (if you don't have a Bible with you, grab one underneath the chair in front of you and turn to page 998)

**Opening ILLS:** Wouldn't you say that one of the great hindrances to the gospel is hypocrisy? People who claim to believe one thing but deny these very beliefs with their actions. Have you ever considered the hypocrisy of atheism? Consider this illustration from Francis Schaeffer. He uses the analogy of a two-story house. In the first story is the finite world without God. In the second story are meaning, value, and purpose. Now the atheist lives in the first story because he believes there is no God but he cannot live happily in such an absurd world; therefore, he continually makes leaps of faith into the second story to affirm meaning, value, and purpose. But let's be clear, he has no right to make this leap into the second story since he does not believe in God. He is totally inconsistent when he makes this leap, because these values cannot exist without God. Here are some examples of these inconsistencies, unwarranted leaps:

**1) If God does not exist, there is no absolute right and wrong.** How does an atheist respond to the holocaust? Was it perfectly ok for Nazi soldiers to slaughter six million innocent Jews, with over a million of these being children? How can anyone live as if this were all right? Everything in you cries out to say these acts are wrong — really wrong. So you make a leap of faith to the second story and affirm values anyway. And when you do, you reveal the inadequacy of a world without God. No atheist, no agnostic, can live consistently with such a view.

**2) If there is no God, all evil acts of men go unpunished (Hitler, Stalin: 10 – 20 million in the Ukraine, and Pol Pot: as much as 2.5 million Cambodians, 1/3 of the total population).**

**3) All the sacrifices of good men go unrewarded.** Let's say you were on the Titanic when it was going down and there was one spot left on the last safety boat. What do you do? Do you take the last spot or let the 6 year old child standing beside you go? The world would respect and admire the selfless and good act of letting the child go, but if the atheist is right, giving up that last spot would be stupidest thing possible. Forget the child, do whatever it takes to survive. For the atheist there can be no reason to give up your life. "And yet the atheist, like the rest of us, instinctively reacts with praise for this man's selfless action.

William Lane Craig says, "One will probably never find an atheist who lives consistently with his system. For a universe without moral accountability and devoid of value is unimaginably terrible" (*Reasonable Faith*).

**The point of this illustration:** Atheists profess with their mouths that there is no God yet they cannot live consistently with this belief. Let me ask you a question: Are you living consistent with your beliefs? Does your doctrine relate to your deeds? Your belief to your behavior? Do your works show evidence that you really know God? Does your life look absurd with God?

**Transition:** Today we are starting a series through the Book of Titus called, "Good Doctrine. Good Deeds." God's overarching message to us through this book is his concern that we wed our doctrine and our deeds, our belief and our behavior, our faith and our works, our head and our heart.

Essential to studying any book of the Bible is understanding the context: Who wrote it? Who did he write it to? Why did he write it? The great news is that most of the time the text provides all of the information that we need. **Let's read Titus 1:1-4.**

### **Who is the author?**

This letter was written by Paul, the former Pharisee and persecutor of the church (Acts 7:58), who is called the servant of God and the apostle of Jesus Christ.

In Paul's 13 other letters, he usually introduces himself as an apostle but only as a "**Servant**" in Romans. While the "servant" language may not be as common with Paul, it is a common designation among key figures through the OT (Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and David). Paul seems to be casting himself in a long line of biblical figures who have been God's spokesman from the beginning. Combined with the fact that slaves didn't act on their own authority, Paul is stressing that his authority has been given to him from Jesus Christ and his exclusive service is to his Lord.

Paul's use of "**apostle**" language further highlights the divine authority from which he is writing from. Though he formerly persecuted the church, through his encounter with the risen Christ, he was called to be an apostle sent with authority specifically to the Gentiles. He is the apostle "of Jesus Christ" and here he identifies Jesus as the Christ, namely, as the Messiah promised in the OT, the anointed one of God.

### **Who is the recipient?**

Titus is noted as the recipient and he is mentioned thirteen times in the New Testament (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6, 13, 14; 8:6, 16; 12:18 twice; Gal. 2:1; 2 Tim. 4:10; and Titus 1:4). He was a convert from a non-Jewish heritage and first appears with Paul at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:2; Gal. 2:1, 3). Paul calls him "my true child according to a common faith"; this is nearly identical to Paul's description of Timothy (1 Tim. 1:2: "To Timothy, my true child in the faith"). Paul refers to their "common faith" in order to remind Titus (uncircumcised) along with the false teachers "of the circumcision" (1:10) that they share the same faith. He is the apostles proof that one does not need to become a Jew to be a Christian. While the letter was written specifically to Titus, it was intended to be read to the whole church (cf. 2:2ff., 15; 3:1ff., 8, 15c "grace be with you all").

### **Why is Paul writing to Titus? What is the occasion? (Read Titus 1:5)**

Titus 1:5 informs us that Paul had previously been in Crete. Crete is the largest of the Greek islands in the Mediterranean Sea south of mainland Greece and Turkey. Crete was known in the ancient world for its immorality and the birthplace of the Greek god Zeus.

The narrative of Acts doesn't describe any accounts of Paul doing mission work in Crete so the traditional understanding has been that Titus was written in the time between Paul's first imprisonment (Acts 28) and a second imprisonment which led to Paul's death. This would date this letter sometime in the mid-60's around the same time as 1 Timothy. Paul had left Titus there so that he might see the church established and thriving with its own leaders. This is consistent with Paul's missionary strategy see in Acts (Acts 14:21-23). Paul's missionary strategy involved not only winning believers but also making sure churches were being established with the leadership in place to lead them.

The other primary concern for Paul was the presence of false teachers (**Read 1:10-16**) and this leads to the primary reason for the letter. While Paul doesn't make explicit the content of this false teaching, it seems to have some Jewish elements ("the circumcision party" 1:10, "Jewish myths" 14, "ritual purity" 15). His primary concern is over the practical effect of the false teaching. "In spite of their concern for ritual purity, the adherents of the false teaching did not live lives of godliness flowing out of the gospel but instead lived in a way that proved they did not know God (1:16)" (ESV Study Bible). Titus 1:16 says,

"They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work."

## **The Theme and Structure**

The theme of Titus is the inseparable link between faith and practice, belief and behavior, doctrine and deeds. This is the basis for its critique of false teaching as well as its instruction on Christian living and qualifications for church leaders. Paul is therefore providing a portrait of a healthy church.

Beyond just introducing the author and recipients, Paul lays out the purpose of his apostleship, which corresponds well to the purpose of his writing. He desired to see healthy churches established, governed by faithful elders, maintaining sound doctrine and good works.

**The Point: In order to be a healthy church, we must know the gospel, live the gospel, and eagerly wait the consummation of the gospel.**

### **I. Know the Gospel**

“For the sake of” is best translated as “to further the faith of...” (RSV). It could also be translated, “for the interest of...” Just as in Rom. 1:5, Paul’s apostleship is to “bring about the obedience of faith among the Gentiles.”

“God’s elect” can also be the “chosen of God”: this phrase is used in the NT to designate Christians and to emphasize who it is that has elected them (see Rom. 8:33; Col. 3:12).

RHC Statement of Faith:

Election is the gracious purpose of God, whereby He chose some persons unto everlasting life—not because of foreseen merit in them, but of His sheer mercy in Christ—in consequence of which choice they are called, justified and glorified. God’s grace therefore excludes boasting and promotes humility (Rom. 8:28-30; 1 Cor. 1:27-29; Eph. 1:4, 11).

“Knowledge of the truth”: see 1 Tim 2:4, “who [God] desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Our faith is in Jesus Christ but it is based on certain *truths* about him. You must come to understand key truths in order to be converted. “The truth” occurs often in the PE as a synonym for the gospel (1 Tim. 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:15, 18, 25; 3:7, 8; Titus 1:1, 14). See also (2:11-14 & 3:4-8).

**What are the key truths of the gospel? (The goal of the gospel is to get us back to God).**

- **Creation:** in the beginning, God created everything to be perfect. He created man with the grand purpose of worshipping him by loving him, serving him, and enjoying relationship with him. All of creation was in harmony and was exactly the way it was supposed to be. No pain, no suffering, no sickness, no death. **But something happened...**

- **Fall:** man rebelled against a loving God and believed Satan’s lie, that God was not good and didn’t have their best interest in mind. The consequences were devastating. Like a virus, sin entered into all of creation and into every human heart. Everything is now distorted and broken. Everyone is guilty before God. We are far more flawed and far more sinful than we can dare imagine. **Can anything be done? Is there any hope?**

- **Rescue:** Over the next centuries, God prepared the way for Jesus to come and rescue people by his death and resurrection. His life was unique. He never sinned. The perfectly innocent died to rescue the hopelessly guilty. **The story doesn’t end here...**

- **Restoration:** God will restore everything to the way that it was supposed to be, and those who trust in Jesus will get to enjoy eternity with God in the new heaven and new earth. No more pain, suffering, sickness, or death. The most wonderful part of this story is that we will be with God forever. **What’s your part in this story?**

- **Your Response:** By faith alone in him, you can have your sins forgiven and enjoy eternal life with him. Faith is simple trust in Jesus alone to save you. It means instead of believing you can rescue yourself from the consequence of sin, you transfer your trust to the rescue he purchased for you by his death.

**You can embrace the rescue of God by simply:** 1) Admitting your need to God, 2) Asking him to forgive you and help you to turn from sin, 3) Trusting in Jesus Christ alone to rescue you, and 4) Following Jesus Christ, the king of your life, in faith from this day forward.

## **II. Live the Gospel**

Paul insists that this truth produces godliness. This is in strong contrast to the false teachers (1:16) and Paul expected that that the gospel would produce real godliness in everyday life. You were created in the image of God to reflect God (1 Cor. 10:31). All of life is about the glory of God. Godliness is also the pathway to satisfaction and joy in life.

### 1) You are responsible for godliness (see 2:11).

“You are I are responsible to train ourselves. We are dependent upon God for His divine enablement, but we are responsible; we are not passive in this process” (Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Godliness*).

“There is a price to godliness, and godliness is never on sale. It never comes cheaply or easily. The verb *train*, which Paul deliberately chose, implies persevering, painstaking, diligent effort” (Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Godliness*).

### 2) God provides divine enablement

God not only calls us to be godly, he also supplies us with everything we need to be godly.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence (2 Pet. 1:3).

### 3) Godliness involves doing good works (see 2:14; 3:8, 14).

God wants you to serve the church, but service is no value apart from godliness.

Who comes to mind when you think about a godly man or woman? A parent, a church worker, a former Sunday School teacher, a Pastor, a Christian leader? What makes them godly? What characteristics do they have? Not have? What are some examples of good works? Paul will inform us of these throughout the letter.

## **III. Eagerly Wait for the Consummation of the Gospel**

Paul emphasizes the Christian’s hope at the beginning because in the course of his argument, it is the “blessed hope” of Christ’s return that motivates the Christian to live a godly life (cf. 2:13). The goal of the gospel is to get us to God!!!

“In hope of eternal life”: this gives another reason for Paul’s apostleship. “Hope” is the confident expectation based on God’s promise. Paul is highlighting the endless future life which believers will have as a gift from God through Jesus Christ and will enjoy fellowship with God and his people. Hope is not wishful thinking but certainty. Hope fosters endurance and patience.

“Which God, who never lies”: God’s faithfulness is expressed negatively here. It’s not just that he never lies, he *cannot* lie.

God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? (Numbers 23:19 ESV).

So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us (Hebrews 6:17-18 ESV).

God’s truthfulness is a common biblical assertion but is particularly meaningful in light of the Cretan context (1:12-13).

“Upon God’s faithfulness rests our whole hope of future blessedness. Only as He is faithful will His covenants stand and his promises be honored. Only as we have complete assurance that He is faithful may we live in peace and look forward with assurance to the life to come” (A. W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*).

“Promised before the ages”: This refers to eternity past. Paul is looking back to God’s decision before time and the world began.

“And at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching”: God now moves from eternity past to the manifestation in time and history of God’s promise. “Manifested” means to reveal, make known, to show. What is revealed is “his word,” namely, the gospel message. Since eternal life is unseen, God makes known the truth about eternal life in the gospel.

This revealing was “at the proper time”. See 1 Tim. 2:5-6.

He then links this manifestation with “preaching”: he links the essence of the gospel message to the apostolic communication of that message. In other words, God has not only manifested the content of the gospel message but he has also done so in and through the apostolic proclamation (see Rom. 16:25-27).

“With which I have been entrusted by the command...”: Paul wants to make sure that his being entrusted with the gospel, i.e. his apostleship, did not originate from humans but is from God himself (see Gal. 1:1, 11, 12). Paul also uses the emphatic “I” since he always remains amazed that he, a former opponent to the gospel, was entrusted by God’s grace with the proclamation of the gospel.

“God our Savior”: the one who has entrusted Paul with the gospel is indeed *their* Savior. “Christ Jesus our Savior” - see 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6

Conclusion: by referring to the “preaching” with which he was entrusted, Paul returns to the purpose of his apostleship and concludes this portion of the salutation. “This clear statement of Paul’s authoritative apostleship and its purpose of furthering the spiritual health and well-being of God’s people provides for Titus the basis for communicating and carrying out Paul’s sometimes forceful demands in this letter” (Knight, 286).

**Father’s Day Application:** there is no greater need than to see Father’s who 1) know the gospel and can teach it to their children, 2) live the gospel for their children to have an example to follow, 3) eagerly wait for the consummation of the gospel. We need men to step up and be serious in their pursuit of God.

Do you profess to know God yet deny him by your works? Do your works show evidence that you really do know God?