

Titus - Overview (NOT verse-by-verse)

“Truth Which Accords With Godliness” - Part 1 of 2

Intro:

We only have a couple of Wednesdays to move through the book of Titus together so instead of going deep, doing a verse-by-verse in-depth study as we normally do, we're going to attempt to do more of an overview of this wonderful letter, sort of like what we've been doing with Pastor Dale as it relates to the overview of the First Testament or Old Testament on Wednesday nights.

Titus is a short book

- Written by Paul to his protegee Titus.
- Titus is what's referred to as a Pastoral Epistle.
- There are two other letters traditionally referred to as Pastoral Epistles and those are 1 & 2 Timothy
- Called Pastoral Epistles because they're personal letters
 - Written directly to individual church leaders
 - Address matters of doctrine, leadership, and godliness.
 - This letter contains directions to Titus concerning the elders of the Church
 - Provides guidance/instruction on appointing elders
 - Encourages:
 - Obedience to those who govern in society
 - Diligence in good works
 - Avoidance of nonsense and heresy.

The general theme Paul addresses in his letter to Titus:

1. Godliness in leadership
2. Godliness in the church & at home
3. Godliness in the world

This is a letter that speaks to MODELING. How we are to MODEL, as Christians, for others. As Paul puts it, "...*knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness*" (Titus 1:1).

In other words, our works, our deeds, our actions, HOW WE CONDUCT OURSELVES, should match our faith.

- "If we talk "the talk" then we oughta be walking "the walk".
- A pattern of ever-increasing Humility, Holiness, and Happiness (Joy). Our relationship with Christ, our faith, should produce a pattern of these things. That you are being forged, more and more, into the likeness of Christ each and every day.

This letter speaks largely to modeling and how we're to walk out our faith in matters of leadership at home, the church, and in the world. There's an old maxim that says, "your actions are so loud that I cannot hear what you say". God forbid that we would fit that! There's an old cliché that you may have heard through the years that says that, "you are the only bible that most people will ever read, so act accordingly". Not SPEAK accordingly - ACT accordingly. Talk is cheap. There are talkers and there are doers. Don't be a talker.

- NOT about works unto salvation.
- IS about profession & possession of faith that accords with godliness.

- Nearness to God brings likeness to God. You cannot have an experience with Him and walk away unchanged. The more that you and I see God, the more of God will be seen in us. Seen in us. Not HEARD in us. SEEN!

Chapter 1:1-4:

Paul sends his salutations to Titus:

- Includes the phrase, "...*knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness*".
 - It is this that sets the whole tone of the letter. We are to act in such a way that our actions cannot bring reproach upon Christ. Because ultimately, **that** is Who will wear the black eye for our mishandling of our own personal conduct; a conduct that does NOT accord with our faith.

If, **in love**, we share the Gospel Truth that an unrepentant sinner who dies in their sin will be separated from God for all eternity and they hate you for it, God will handle that. But if I'm a jerk because I'm operating out of the flesh, out of my own insecurity/pain/fear/whatever, and I injure someone with my words and actions that were designed to hurt that person, then **I'M** held accountable to that and **I** have brought reproach upon Christ. Let us walk in the sight of God. It's so EASY to SOUND like a Christian. It's an altogether different thing to WALK IT OUT. I think we all relate to that.

Note something really fascinating about what Paul writes here from verses 1-3 in Chapter 1.

[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 began [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,

In just these 3 verses, he points to the 3 aspects of our Christian walk:

1. **Salvation**: God's plan to redeem the elect through the preaching of the Gospel
2. **Sanctification**: God's plan to build up the believers through the Word
3. **Glorification**: God's ultimate purpose to bring believers to eternal glory with Him

Okay that's great information. But how do I apply that to **my** life in the context of this letter?

Well, there are any number of ways depending on how the Holy Spirit ministers to you through that set of verses. But I might suggest: **HOPE**. How? Look at it: Whoever God SAVES, He SANCTIFIES. And whoever He SANCTIFIES, He GLORIFIES. (harmonizes with Romans 8:28-30). That should cause us GREAT hope! Remember this well: we went to the Master with nothing of our own, casting ourselves on His mercy; we believe that He died for us, and now, He will never throw us away. You and I did **nothing** to win His affections, therefore our bad works cannot sever that affection.

Chapter 1:5-9:

Paul is providing instructions to Titus on how to appoint pastors/leaders and notes the character and qualifications of those he is to choose, or appoint. Paul's letter to Timothy is similar in terms of how the qualifications for leaders in those letters and in this one, harmonize. But there's a VERY important pattern here: Christian leaders, Pastors, Elders, etc. **AS GOD'S STEWARDS** are to be **ABOVE REPROACH** and are to manage the affairs of their HOUSEHOLDS **well**, seeing as how they are to be **examples** to their respective flocks. Modeling. But lest we look at that and say, "Oh, well this just applies to Pastors, or church leadership, so I'm off the hook", remember that the whole point is MODELING. It's a point we can't escape.

There's a good reason a church leader should be "above reproach" ("BLAMELESS"). Because as servants of Christ, (that's ALL of us), we are called to be ABLE MINISTERS of the Word in **both** speech and practice.

- Titus is to appoint those who are MODELING. MODELS, or examples, of good works, good character, and those able to manage their households and **therefore**, able to minister to others effectively.

Paul then goes on to describe false teachers and how faithful ministers must oppose such people, especially within the church beginning here in verse 10. Paul spends the next 6 verses, to the end of Chapter 1 in fact, pointing out those who serve their corruption at the expense of God's people. Many easily-identifiable examples of this today. But what about the ones that aren't so easily noticed? They're particularly dangerous because they DON'T show up like growling beasts. **They** show up and because we're often so easily seduced by the beautiful things they peddle, due in large part to the corrupt nature of our flesh, we can become susceptible to it.

Common false teaching today:

God is reduced to nothing more than a cosmic ATM machine - you can get God to do YOUR will and all is well. What LOW esteem of the character and nature of God. One of the reasons that the so-called "prosperity gospel" is so dangerous is because it promises **exactly** what the flesh wants. The TRUE Gospel says to your flesh, "You must die!". The prosperity gospel says to your flesh, "You get to live!" and "You get everything that you, in your sinful, carnal state ever wanted". That is NOT the gospel. That's another gospel entirely. Paul is instructing Titus that false teaching is to be resisted, and even shamed, by way of SOUND DOCTRINE.

Apologetic point:

It appears here in Chapter 1 beginning in verse 12 through 13a. This is a point where Paul quotes a Cretan who had written, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons". Then Paul goes on to say, "This statement is true". The attack used against the inerrancy of scripture is that Paul committed a logical fallacy because the Holy Spirit apparently inspired this letter, and the Holy Spirit can't lie. Therefore the Bible must contain error.

Paul was a well-educated guy. He was trained by Gamaliel, the highly respected Jewish rabbi and was knowledgeable not only in Jewish law and literature but also in classical Greek literature. You may recall while he was lecturing to some Epicureans and Stoics back in Acts 17:22-34, and specifically in verse 28, Paul quotes both Epimenides and Aratus, using them to make his point.

So that brings us back to the "all Cretans are liars" thing. This is actually a form of a logical paradox commonly known as the "Paradox of Epimenides" and it goes something like this: "A Cretan said, 'All Cretans are liars.'" If, as Paul affirms, this statement is true, then the statement is false because a Cretan, who **is** a liar, made it. These affirmations - that the statement is true and the statement is false - contradict each other and violate the logical "Law of Non-Contradiction", because a statement cannot be both true and false at the same time.

In trying to better understand what seems to be a contradiction here, we need to realize that first off, Epimenides was a poet. Poets, playwrights, and other writers *frequently* use a literary technique known as "hyperbole", which is simply defined as "a **deliberate exaggeration** used to make a point". Saying that "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons," is to comment

on Cretan society as a whole and describes it as being immoral and decadent, not necessarily that **every single individual in that society** was a liar, evil beast, or lazy glutton. When we view that commentary in the light of hyperbole, there IS no logical paradox found in Titus 1:12. Epimenides was simply making a hyperbolic statement about the conduct and the culture of the people of Crete, and Paul was simply agreeing with him in order to point out to Titus the difficulty facing the Cretan elders that he was to appoint.

Coming to the end of Chapter 1

- Paul comments on Cretan society as a whole
- Exhorts Titus to rebuke those that act in accord with ungodliness (the Cretan comment)

The chief aim of any rebuke is for the BENEFIT of the one/ones being rebuked. Many people profess to know God. Yet, very often with their lives, they deny Him and reject Him. People often do a lot of talking about their Christianity but without a REAL, authentic relationship with Christ. People that LOVE to talk about what THEY are doing for the Lord but who really struggle to talk about what the Lord is doing in THEM; how much more broken we are, how much more aware we are of our own depravity and how hopelessly in need of a Savior we are. Let us never be those that have a **form** of godliness but are utterly without power. And let us be most ready to cast this charge upon ourselves before we cast it upon others. Let us all examine our own hearts. This is an exhortation to us all. Pastor Dale always says to me that there can come a point in Ministry where you can become so “good” at it that it stops reaching YOU. Let us never get to that point in our walk with Him.

Chapter 2:1-8:

Paul exhorts Titus to teach that which accords with sound doctrine. We are to behave in a way that is agreeable to Christian doctrine. We expect new Christians to falter in this area for a time while they are being built up, being “infants” in the Lord. Again, closeness with Christ should produce those 3 H’s we spoke of earlier: Humility, Holiness, and Happiness (Joy). Babies, for

the most part, are adorable. But a 40 year old in a diaper with a pacifier isn't cute at all; it's disturbing. So why would we allow for that in our faith-walk? And I'm speaking of myself here - I'm still often somewhat crude in my banter and humor. I still listen to music that is so far from Christ-exalting. It pains me to say that I still treat people occasionally much like I would treat a stray animal. With a sort of general disregard. Christ never treats ME like that. So this message is very piercing for me personally. Be reminded: whoever God saves, He also sanctifies. And whoever He sanctifies, He glorifies. So have hope that even **when you do** fail, He has you. This message is necessary.

- We are reminded to be sober, not given to excess
- We are to seek greater comforts by seeking a greater communion with the Lord, a greater fellowship with God
- We are never to act in such a way that the Word of God might be blasphemed or suffer reproach because of something we did, in our own flesh

We don't walk out our Christian lives for the sake of the world's approval - we walk out our Christian lives as in the sight of God. Let us then act in such a way that we silence the mouths of our critics. After all, how amazing it is when someone in the world who would no sooner than open his mouth against a servant of Christ, can find no evil in him to speak of!

Chapter 2:9-10:

Paul is telling Titus

- Servants must know and do their duty to their earthly masters with a reference to their HEAVENLY One!
 - When being corrected in our work, let us not be disrespectful or provocative.

- We are to accept correction without being argumentative
- We must never excuse/justify our shortcomings **because that only multiplies them.**
- We are never to use for our own personal gain, something that doesn't belong to us, nor waste the resources which we are trusted with. This goes for wasting time at work also. If after all, we are being compensated for our labor and we give none, we are stealing. Remember that there is a bargain made between employers and employees: money is traded for labor. If we don't labor while being compensated for it, then we're committing theft. And Gee, what a wonderful witness for Christ that is. So you can begin to see here that it's easy to talk about Christianity but what about the part where we actually have to live it? In this particular context, in the workplace.

Story about a former co-worker, years back:

- worked with a fellow believer who was constantly being rebuked by our boss because when they should have been working, they were standing around evangelizing. Such a bad witness for Christ.
- He was seen as lazy, incompetent, and was ultimately fired. He was passionate about the spiritual things but had no interest in **practical** Christianity. He just wouldn't do his job; the one he was paid for.

There is no "gray area" in scripture for behavior like that. Least of all, not here in Titus. He could have evangelized on his breaks. During lunch. Before work, after work, whatever. No, he stole his employer's resources because though the non-Christian employer held up his end of the bargain by paying this guy, the Christian employee chose selfishness instead. And it ruined any witness of Christ this guy had in that workplace. Nobody wanted any part of the gospel he was peddling because they **saw** what it produced.

Let's imagine it another way: Let's say this guy arrived early, started BEFORE his shift began, out-worked everyone there, stayed late and did all of it HAPPILY with a smile, because he realized that he was "serving as unto the Lord". Now that's a whole different witness for Christ, is it not?

I need to bring up Pastor Dale for a moment:

When I first met him just over 2 years ago while he and Donna were in Seattle, I met a guy who said he was a Pastor, whose wife was dying. I started to examine him very carefully. It was an unconscious thing but I watched him very carefully. I think I was expecting him to be just like every other Christian I had met: FAKE. Having a **form** of godliness but with no power whatsoever. "How are things, man?" - "Oh praise Jesus, God is good" all with a big phony smile on his face that would betray the reality of the pain underneath. Frankly, in my eyes, it wouldn't just betray his reality - it would betray his faith. **That's what I was expecting.** But that's not what I saw! For the first time, I saw the hand of CHRIST heavy upon a man. A man who was so utterly broken, so utterly desperate to cling to the hem of Christ, so completely transparent, and because of it all, and how near to the Cross he had to be, seeing a man strong in Christ. It BLEW.MY.MIND. This guy was actually WALKING-IT-OUT. No fakery, no phoniness, not put-on happy-slappy-nonsense. Just a real dude squarely in the arms of Christ. Sharing the pain, sharing the process, not just the victory that so many of us love to celebrate. I could go on and on, but what I'm trying to highlight here is the truth which Paul is writing to Titus about: how we are to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in our conduct. The truth according to godliness. Now I'm NOT attempting to elevate Pastor Dale to sainthood here. He'd be the first person to throw me out if I did so. What I AM saying is that the way UP is DOWN.