

“Truth and Godliness”
Titus 1:1
(Preached at Trinity, January 15, 2023)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Verses 1-4** contain Paul's salutation to this letter. It is the third longest salutation among Paul's epistles. Paul affirms that the letter is from him, and he affirms his office as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He also designates Titus as the recipient. Paul had left Titus at Crete to strengthen the churches and correct false doctrine and promote Godliness in an immoral culture. He's writing to encourage and instruct Titus in his work. One of the themes running through the Book of Titus is the inseparable relationship between doctrine and practice.
2. Paul states this at the very beginning. God is bringing His chosen people to faith and the knowledge of the truth. But as faith is never barren so also is truth. It always produces the fruit of Godliness.
Titus 1:1 NAU - "the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness"
Titus 1:1 CSV & NIV - "the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness"
3. Paul uses the Greek preposition *κατὰ* twice in **Verse 1**. Greek prepositions provide clarity, often much more than what we find in English, but they can often be difficult to translate and interpret. In general Paul is saying he has been called as an apostle for the sake of the faith of the elect and the knowledge of the truth that corresponds to Godliness.
4. Godliness transcends the culture we happen to live in. The people of Crete were known for their Godlessness.
Titus 1:12 NAU - "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."
God's people were to shine the righteousness of Christ.
5. Paul was a servant of Christ, but this service manifested itself in Paul's service to others. His great desire was to see God's elect people grow and mature in their faith. He wanted every Christian to know the fullness of God.
Ephesians 3:14-19 NAU - "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."
6. He writes here in **Verse 1** that Jesus Christ had called him as an apostle for the sake of the faith of God's elect. But our faith is not void of truth. Paul knew the importance of sound doctrine. He wanted all of God's elect to come to the fullness of the knowledge of the truth. Only an understanding of right doctrine would be able to grow them in right living.

7. This morning I want to set before you the importance of right thinking as it relates to right living. Paul sees this as the essential force of his ministry.
"for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness,"
- I. Knowledge is essential for salvation – the knowledge of the truth
- A. Paul used the expression “knowledge of the truth” as another way to describe Christian salvation.
1. There is no faith without knowledge.
1 Timothy 2:3-4 NAU - "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."
2 Timothy 2:24-26 NAU - "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵ with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."
2 Timothy 3:7 NAU - "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."
 2. Saving truth is not vague. There is Biblical truth, absolute truth. Calvin wrote: “Paul does not speak of every kind of truth, but of the heavenly doctrine, which is contrasted the vanity of human understanding. As God has revealed himself to us by means of that truth, so it is alone worthy of the honor of being called ‘the truth.’”¹
- B. Paul wasn’t talking about mere speculative knowledge
1. Paul didn’t have in mind the simple acquisition of facts. Paul knew the power of God’s transforming grace.
 2. Jesus told those who believed in Him:
John 8:31-32 NAU - "If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."
- II. Christianity is a religion of the mind.
- A. Too often Christians diminish the importance of right thinking—of sound doctrine
1. Greater emphasis is placed upon our experience
Since its release in 1990 over 8 million copies of Henry Blackaby’s book, *Experiencing God*, have been sold in the U.S. While on one hand it upholds the infallibility of Scripture, it puts great weight upon subjective experience.
“When God speaks to you in your quiet time, immediately write down what He said,” (p.172).
 2. For some, feelings trump everything else. My behavior is approved by God because I “feel” it is. “I have a peace about it.”
 3. Even more dangerous, “I’m a Christian because I feel I am.”

¹ John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, Vol. 21. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), page 282.

- B. Instead, we must fill our minds with objective, Biblical truth.
1. Over and over the Bible admonishes us to give importance to right thinking. Of filling our minds with truth. Of training our minds to think.
1 Peter 1:13 NAU - "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."
Matthew 22:37 NAU - "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."
 2. It is our mind that is transformed through Gospel regeneration.
 - a. When we were lost our minds were corrupt
Ephesians 2:3 NAU - "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."
Colossians 1:21 NAU - "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds, ²² yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach--"
 - b. God has given lost humanity over to a depraved mind.
Romans 1:28-31 NAU - "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;"
 - c. When God saves us He changes our way of thinking.
Romans 12:2 NAU - "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
 - d. The Word of God is rightly applied to our minds. Right thinking results in right living.
1 Peter 2:1-2 NAU - "Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, ² like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,"

III. Sound doctrine is essential for true Godliness

- A. How can you serve God whom you do not know?
1. Can you be moved to holiness when you don't understand the holiness of God?
 2. Can you walk the pathway of righteousness without a proper map. God's Law provides the map
- B. God takes His own Word and writes it upon our minds
1. James calls it the implanting of God's Word
James 1:21-22 NAU - "Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. ²² But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves."
 2. This is at the heart of the New Covenant
Hebrews 8:10 NAU - "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, And I will write them upon their hearts. And I will be their God, And they shall be My people."
 3. The Holy Spirit stirs our minds with the truth. As we call to mind the Word of God it instructs how we live.
2 Peter 3:1-2 NAU - "This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, ² that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior *spoken* by your apostles."
Romans 12:2 NAU - "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
- C. Paul understood the importance of doctrinal truth because sound doctrine affects how we live. A person cannot progress in Godliness without possessing right doctrine.
1. Apparently, there were false teachers teaching things that were upsetting whole families. Their corrupt teaching was resulting in corrupt living.
Titus 1:10-11 NAU - "For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹ who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach* for the sake of sordid gain."
 2. By the behavior of these false teachers they revealed that they did not know Christ.
Titus 1:16 NAU - "They profess to know God, but by *their* deeds they deny *Him*, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed."
 3. To confront them Paul gave Titus a simple exhortation:
Titus 2:1 NAU - "But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine."

4. The source of this sound doctrine is singular – our rule is the Bible alone. Our Confession affirms this:
1689 London Baptist Confession
 Chapter 1:1 - Of the Holy Scriptures
The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.
5. The men chosen to lead the church would be those carefully examined in their doctrine.
Titus 1:9 NAU - "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict."

IV. Our doctrine is never embraced as a cold acquisition of facts.

- A. Head knowledge alone makes us proud.
 1. Cold knowledge can produce strife, arguing for the sake of winning the debate.
 2. Knowledge in the unregenerate mind disregards the worth of other people
1 Corinthians 8:1-2 NAU - "Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. ² If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know;"
- B. The highest and greatest knowledge is knowing Christ.
 1. Paul knew the power of knowing Christ savingly.
Philippians 3:8-11 NAU - "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the Law*, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."
 2. Knowing Christ savingly changes how we think, how we live. It changes our priorities. It redirects our love. Those who know Christ obey Him.
1 John 2:3-5 NAU - "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ⁵ but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:"
John 14:15 NAU - "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."

Conclusion:

1. In **Verse 1** Paul draws an inseparable connection between faith, knowledge, and Godliness. Richard Phillips rightly puts it:
“For Paul, evangelism did not cease at bare professions of faith, but advanced to doctrinal knowledge and practical godliness. The Bible teaches that true faith receives salvation at the moment we believe. Yet the truth of our profession of faith is proved not merely by assent to the gospel but by its fruit in the form of repentance from sin and good works. Any profession of faith that does not lead to godliness must therefore be suspected as spurious and unsaving.”²
2. As Christians, we are to grow in our knowledge of Christ, and that knowledge will drive and direct every aspect of our life.
This is because it is a relational knowledge. He knows us and we know Him. We are drawn to Him more and more in love. Out of love we desire to obey Him more and more.

² Daniel M. Doriani and Richard D. Phillips, *2 Timothy & Titus*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2020), 132.