

Titus 1:1 – 1:4 An Introduction to the Man and the Letter

Pastor Michael Engle

Introduction

First, let me say that we'll be working through the entire book of Titus over the course of four weeks. However, those weeks will not be consecutive. So, what we learn this week, you'll have to keep in your pocket until we come back to Titus in late July. Today we'll be discussing who Titus is and we'll be working through the first four verses of the book.

Who do you think of when I say the name, Titus? I'm sure for many of you the fact that I am the one saying the name, moved your mind to someone other than the Titus I'm currently speaking of. I'll say it another way. Who, or what, kind of man do you think of when I ask you to think of the Titus in your New Testament? What was he like? How much of a description of him do we have in our Bibles? Have we heard about him in any other books of the Bible? Why is he chosen to do the work that will be laid out before him in the book of Titus? This is what we want to figure out first. Please turn in your Bibles to the book of Titus and we'll pray before we get started.

First of all, this book we call Titus was written by the Apostle Paul. It is part of what we'll call the Pastoral Epistles. Included in the Pastoral Epistles, or Pastoral Letters, are first and second Timothy and our current book, Titus. These Pastoral Epistles differ from other letters like the ones to the Ephesians, or Galatians in that they were written to one man instead of a whole Church. These men, Timothy and Titus had very close relationships with the Apostle Paul as we will soon see.

Jerusalem Council

The book of Titus was written in the mid sixties. Titus and Paul had known each other for about fourteen years. At least, that's the best we can tell from our Bible. You see Paul first mentions his relationship to Titus, at around the year fifty, in Galatians 2, where God's word says this, "But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek." Hmm. While this may not seem like a big deal on the face of it, this verse is a huge deal in the early church and it gives us some feel for the kind of man Titus was. The occasion for his "not [being] forced to be circumcised" was likely the Jerusalem Council. This was one of the defining moments of the early Church. Paul has gone to Jerusalem where people Paul calls "false brothers" have stirred up controversy say that all believers had to be circumcised! This is huge for Paul and for us, in that most of us are Gentiles, and if these "false brothers" had won the day...we would be in line for circumcision, not just Baptism. Thankfully that was not the case! And who did Paul take with him to test this "false" theory of salvation by circumcision, but his gentile friend, Titus. Can you imagine the pressure and stress that Titus was under. He had been taught by Paul for some time and knew if Paul lost this argument he was going to have to do some pretty serious rethinking of his faith, not to mention some pretty painful re-configuring of his body!

Not only that, but Paul and his friend Titus aren't going up to Jerusalem to argue with just

anybody. Who will be in attendance at this meeting? How 'bout these names. Ever heard of James, Cephas (or Peter) and John. Yeah, that James, that Peter, that John. The ones who wrote books of the Bible. I know what your thinkin'. Sure, but Titus is hanging out with the Apostle Paul who wrote more books of the Bible than all of them put together. Right, but he doesn't know that yet. And either way, if you were a regular guy like Titus, wouldn't you be a little nervous going up against guys like this!? I would. But it seems Paul is not worried about the strength of conviction and character possessed by Titus. He takes him, out of all he could have chosen, to the council and his argument for not circumcising Titus, as we saw in Gal. 2:3 won the day. In the end, the right hand of fellowship was given and Titus seems to have proven his metal in battle. I'm sure this instance in their friendship went a long way towards moving Paul to chose Titus for the mission we'll discover in his namesake letter.

Corinthians

That instance alone would have been good enough reason for Paul to trust Titus with some pretty significant responsibilities, but there is more. Titus can withstand pressure from others when the heat is not directly on him, but can he work with people, as a leader among them, when there is great difficulty at hand? Paul found out when he sent him off to Corinth. You see, Titus hand delivered a letter to the Corinthians that we no longer have, that has been referred to as the, "severe letter". If you have been here on Sunday evenings to listen to Pastor Russ preach through Corinthians, you know that the situation there was mess. Into this mess Paul sent his dear friend Titus to help bring them in line. Titus has gone to Corinth some time between 1 Corinthians which is written around fifty-four and 2 Corinthians which is written around fifty-six. Paul has written a pretty hard letter to them and Titus has been sent to make sure everything is as it should be. God's word tells us the result of his labor in 2 Corinthians 7 where it reads, *"But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us."* Titus has gone into battle and was used by God to help repair the damaged relationship between the Corinthians and Paul! You know that was not an easy task if you are familiar with the books of Corinthians. Later in the book Titus is referred to by Paul as a "partner and fellow worker". Titus is clearly a patient leader and strong representative of the truth and the Apostle Paul.

This is the kind of man you should think of when you turn to the book of Titus. Paul has no concerns about sending someone like this into a place where their own prophets refer to them as "...liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons". Titus can handle it because he knows the "grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people". This is the Titus, Paul is writing to with the substantial task of putting things in order. Let's look to God's word and see exactly what Paul has written to Titus.

Tonight I'll read you the letter in it's entirety and then we'll discuss the first four verses. God's

word says this in the book of Titus,

Reading The Word

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;

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.

2 But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. ² Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. ³ Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ⁴ and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. ⁶ Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. ⁷ Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, ⁸ and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. ⁹ Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be

well-pleasing, not argumentative, ¹⁰ not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

¹⁵ Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

3 Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. ³ For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. ⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. ⁸ The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. ⁹ But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. ¹⁰ As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

¹² When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. ¹³ Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. ¹⁴ And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.

¹⁵ All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace be with you all. ¹

Greeting

An Apostle v. 1a

“Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ,”

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Tt 1:1–3:15). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Interestingly the HCSB version of Scripture captures that word “servant” as “slave”. For Paul, who had been a slave to sin all of his life this “slave” language is not a bad thing. It is, in fact, a very good thing. Paul is starting off the letter by letting Titus and his charges in Crete know that he cannot do anything but what God wants him to do! He is God’s slave! When did you last here of a slave making out on his own. They don’t do that. Slaves do the will of their master and their master only. They are not free to do what they please. If that were the case they would not rightfully be called, “slave”. As you may have heard in our reading of the book, Paul will soon tell them what they are supposed to be acting like as slaves to the one great master, Jesus Christ.

Paul also drops this little bomb...He is an Apostle of Jesus Christ. Now, his Apostleship was not being debated to the extent it was in other places, but you can be sure it was the subject of some debate. After all, the people receiving Titus have not been painted in the most glamorous light and we can all think about what we would do if someone new were to show up and start telling us how we are to act and live. I’m sure most of us, maybe it just me, would be like, “and you are who”? Paul is just taking care of this right at the start. He has the authority, from God, to say what he is going to say.

A People v. 1b

“...for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness,”

You just heard it didn’t you? Paul is not writing to our man Titus for something trivial. He has not penned this letter to tell him how bad the people in Crete are going to be to deal with. He is not writing to share in the many miseries of ministering in a “hard” place. Paul is not writing to tell Titus of some personal preference he would like to have put in place there in Crete. Paul is writing “for the sake of the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth”! This is not about what color the carpets are, or what kind of worship music you play, or what kind of movies are acceptable to watch. Paul is dealing with the souls of God’s people! This is a serious time for Titus and the people he’s been left to serve. What Paul is about to tell him will mean the difference between people persevering to the end people going to Hell. This is for God’s elect. Those chosen before time began. It is important that Titus and they, get it right.

Not only that, but notice the second part of the sentence, “which accords with godliness”. The NLT says he is to, “teach them to know the truth that shows them how to live godly lives”. You see brothers and sisters it’s not about knowing God’s word better than somebody else. It’s not about knowing what some twenty-five cent theological term means. Those things are not bad, but if even the basic things you know don’t cause you to change your behavior, then what good is it. Are you really one of God’s elect if your understanding of the word never causes you to change?! I would say this, if you do not do the simple things you know you are to do, then I don’t think you should have any confidence in your so called faith just because you think you have your theology down. At the very bottom shelf you are to love your brothers. Do you? If not, who cares whether you understand the difference between lapsarians and prelapsarians?! Or as imagine James might say, “Your faith’s just gotta work”.

A Hope v.2

“...in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began”

So, Paul is an Apostle for the sake of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth which leads to action, but that’s not all. He is also an Apostle for their “hope of eternal life”. Another thing that comes from being one of God’s elect is this hope of eternal life. You know deep in your soul that this world is not all you have. You know there will be a time in the future when God will bring you home to glory. No more tears. No more pain. Why, because you will receive your reward in Heaven and he “great God and Savior Jesus Christ”.

But Pastor, what makes you so sure of this hope? Well, Paul and I are glad you asked. Look at the next part of the sentence. Because God! You can’t have a better guarantee than that. Because God never lies. That’s what we are basing our hope on. This is not just a “hope so” this is a hope founded in the never changing character of God. And as if that’s not enough, Paul goes on...When was this promise of eternal life promised by this God how never lies? Well, it was promise before the ages began! Or as the NLT states it, “before the world began”. God is so good to us to guarantee the hope we have in his very character and has done so before you were ever a thought in anyone’s mind, but his! It’s as if to say, “I didn’t do this based on your great work, but knowing what you would be like before time began...I saved you anyhow”. It’s not based ON you, your hope is based IN me.

A Method v.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;

Paul continues his encouraging of the Saints in sharing when and how this knowledge came to them. It came at the exact, or “proper”, right time. God wasn’t early and he certainly wasn’t late with bring his word to his people through the means of preaching of the word.

Paul then rounds out this greeting by going back to his original statement of authority and says this preaching of the properly timed word was commanded by God our Savior. His authority to write to Titus and the elect of God on Crete was given to him by God. Is there ever a better reason to listen and obey the truth!? It’s given by God. It’s timeless. It’s life changing. It’s to be preached. And it’s commanded by God!

In short, Cretans, It’s time to listen up!

A Child v. 4a

“To Titus, my true child in a common faith:”

Paul then comes to the personal greeting and we should stop and ponder this for moment. Yes, Paul is given authority and commanded to preach the word. But he is also relying on Titus to

bring this word to the Cretans. Titus, his “true child in a common faith:”. Titus is all of those things we talked about at the beginning of the our time together. He is patient and reliable. He is not easily swayed. He is able to work under pressure and a midst the mess of sinful community of people. And perhaps most of all...he is Paul’s “true child”. He was likely lead to the Lord as a result of Paul’s ministry. He has walked alongside this Father figure of Paul and now he is sent to put in order a Church they may have together taken part in starting.

A Reminder v. 4b

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

In closing Paul reminds Titus of something we all need to be reminded of. Without the power of grace, which we’ll see much of in the text, this ministry is doomed to fail. And without the peace of God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior”, you will never be able to wade through the messiness of people lives on your way to an ordered church that stirs up belief and good works among God’s people. Even when those people were, “liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons”.

Closing

So Church, how are these first four verses supposed to stir you up to faith and good works? How is Paul’s greeting to his “true child in a common faith” supposed to effect your daily lives this week after you leave this building and head into your work week?

- ⑩ Who/What is your authority?
- ⑩ Are you one of His people?
- ⑩ Do you have hope?
- ⑩ Do you spread the message?
- ⑩ Where are your children?
- ⑩ Have you reminded them of the things they need?