

Committed To Preach

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I. Titus 1:1-4

A. Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior; To Titus, a true son in *our* common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.

II. Introduction

A. Who is Titus?

1. A Gentile Traveling partner of Paul's (Gal. 2:1-3).
 - a) Not mentioned in the records of Paul's missionary journeys in the Book of Acts.
 - b) What we know of Titus is drawn from this letter together with 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, and 2nd Timothy.
 - c) Titus was closely associated with Paul at Antioch and accompanied Paul and Barnabas from there to Jerusalem when questions arose concerning whether Gentiles must be circumcised to be saved.
 - d) Later, we find Paul at Troas, disappointed in not meeting Titus (2Cor. 2:13), who had been sent on a mission to Corinth; but later, in Macedonia Titus joined him (2Cor. 7:6-7,13-15).
 - e) Titus was sent back to Corinth in company with two other trustworthy Christians, bearing the second epistle to the Corinthians and with the request that he would attend to the collection being taken for the poor Christians of Judea (2Cor. 8:6,17).
 - f) The "brethren" whom Paul mentioned that took the first epistle to Corinth (1Cor. 16:11-12) are thought to be Titus and another unnamed companion.
 - g) It is probably in the interval between the first and second imprisonment of Paul at Rome, when he and Titus visited Crete. This is where Titus remained and received this letter written to him by Paul (Titus 1:5).
 - h) From Titus 1, verse 4, we learn that Paul was instrumental in Titus coming to faith in Christ.

B. Purpose of the Letter

1. "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, . . ." (Tit. 1:5a).

2. Paul had not remained in Crete long enough to complete important work which was foundational to the firm establishment of Christianity there. The important works which Paul will emphasize to Titus include:
 - a) FIRST - Establishing local assemblies with elders having both authority and responsibility for their oversight (Tit. 1:5-9).
 - b) SECOND - Correction of those who were interfering with the progress of the gospel and the development of the Cretan believers, especially the Judaizers who were corrupting the gospel through the addition of legalism (Tit. 1:10-16; 3:9-11).
 - (1) Judaism was represented on Crete as Jewish Cretans were among those specially mentioned as attending the great feast of Pentecost (Acts 2:11).
 - (2) Titus was uniquely positioned to defend the freedoms found in Christ. He accompanied Paul when he went up to Jerusalem to confer with the Apostles.
 - (3) Titus becomes a prototype for the Galatians and a test case for the entire gentile mission of Paul. For though he was a Greek, Titus "was not compelled to be circumcised" (Gal. 2:3).
 - c) THIRD - Upholding sound doctrine by which men and women, both old and young, would grow in Christian maturity (Tit. 2:1-6).
 - d) FOURTH – Exhibiting a pattern of good works commensurate with the fruit of the Spirit – so that the lives of the Cretan believers would not undermine their witness to the gospel (Tit. 2:7-15; 3:1-8, 14).
 - (1) Notice that a pattern of good works should be the result of sound doctrine. Correct living should never be disconnected from correct doctrine (orthodoxy leads to orthopraxy).
 - (2) Charitable living, without a foundation of correct doctrine, will always degenerate into a system of social works which compromises hard gospel truths for the sake of maintaining relationships. (Love over truth.)
3. Titus was to wait for other men sent by Paul, and then return to Paul in Nicopolis, a city in western Greece (Tit. 3:12).
 - a) Tradition associates Titus with Crete on an ongoing basis.
 - (1) He is said to have been permanent bishop on the island and to have died there at an advanced age. The modern capital, Candia, appears to claim the honor of being his burial place. In the fragment by the lawyer Zenas, Titus is called bishop of Gortyna (the chief commercial outpost for Judean interests in Crete [ABD]). Last, the name of Titus was the watchword of the Cretans when they were invaded by the Venetians. [Unger]
4. By now, Titus is no stranger to the sensitivities and firmness required in order to establish believers in the faith and correct both errors of doctrine and practice since he had been sent by Paul to the church at Corinth on a similar mission (2Cor. 12:18).

C. Paul's Ministry in Crete

1. 4th and final missionary journey: under centurion escort to Rome (Acts 27:7-12).
2. Ship reached Fair Havens and remained there less than a month.¹
3. Later, after Paul's release from prison in Rome, Paul appears to have returned to Crete with Titus.
4. Written from Nicopolis, approximately A.D. 65, some 2-3 years before Paul's final imprisonment and death.

III. Exposition

A. Titus 1:1

1. "Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ"

a) Two members of the Godhead

- (1) Servant of God (the father), the God of his fathers Whom Paul was already superficially familiar with from the OT scriptures.
- (2) Apostle of Jesus Christ. The son of God Who Paul was initially unfamiliar with and who rebuked him on the road to Damascus.
- (3) It was Paul's new understanding of Jesus as God which he most closely associated with his mandate as an apostle: a representative or envoy concerning the person and work of Christ.

2. "according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth."

a) Servanthood and apostleship are said to be "according to the faith of God's Elect"

- (1) Better translated as "for the faith" (NASB) or "to further the faith" (NET) "of God's elect."
- (2) Paul is describing the purpose and motivation behind his letter, and ultimately his entire life.
- (3) His primary purpose, when interacting with believers, is to build up their faith and their understanding and acceptance of truth.

b) Election

- (1) A Biblical truth which has fallen on hard times in the man-centered Christianity of our day.
- (2) Paul understood and experienced election like few others.
 - (a) Conversion on road to Damascus – he was zealously opposing the very thing which God had elected him to promote.

¹ *The ship reached Fair Havens in the latter part of September, and was detained there by a continuance of unfavorable winds until after October 5" (Ramsay, p. 322). [Unger, s.v. "Paul"]*

- (b) Acts 22:14 – Ananias' instructions from God to Paul
Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. "
 - (c) "chosen" is [procheirizomai, middle voice] - "to hand pick ahead of time"
 - (d) In time past, God Himself has hand-picked YOU to know His will!
 - (e) Paul was chosen in advance, appointed, ordained by God – in complete opposition to everything Paul was doing at that time.
- (3) Notice how Paul, when writing to the church in Galatia, understands how God's election works in conjunction with His opportune time:
- (a) Galatians 1:15-16 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood,

3. "acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness"

- a) The word for "truth" (*epignosis*) has an intensifying preposition to it which denotes *coming to know and appropriate* that which is known.
 - (1) Acknowledging the truth must go beyond understanding and agreement so that it affects how one lives day-to-day.
 - (2) How does one know when a person acknowledges the truth in the sense Paul speaks of here?
 - (a) Paul gives us a key: the truth which is known "accords with godliness"
 - (b) The Greek could be read: "knowledge of the truth. [Which kind of truth?] The truth which is for the purpose of godly living."
 - (3) A significant and rapidly growing problem within Christianity in our day: "professors" who are not "livers".
 - (a) Saying "I'm a Christian" is relatively easy, living it out day-to-day is not so easy.
 - (b) A growing number within "Christianity" either verbally deny its teachings or live in such a way that their testimony denies the will of the very Lord they profess to follow.
 - i) This is a troubling trend. Christianity would be better off without such professed followers because they are a perverting influence which serves to misrepresent the true Work of God.
 - (c) For the true Christian, Biblical truth is not complete having been captured in a creed, doctrinal statement, or by words of any form. Biblical truth must be *incorporated* into the life of the believer before it is the type of truth the New Testament endorses.

- (d) How else could Paul write to the church at Corinth (2Cor. 3:2-3):
 You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly *you are* an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is*, of the heart.
- (e) As we'll come to see, Paul and Titus faced this same issue of inconsistent Christian living among the believers of Crete as well.

B. Titus 1:2

1. "in hope of eternal life"

- a) This service and apostleship of Paul is motivated not only by the desire to see believers come to live in a way which is pleasing to God in this life, but also knowing that the acknowledgment of God's truth by unbelievers leads to the attainment of eternal life.

2. "which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began"

- a) "promised" is in the middle voice emphasizing the idea that "God [Himself] promised" - the promise is as good as the character of its source
- b) Paul reemphasizes the surety of the promise of eternal life by mentioning that it is impossible for God to lie or mislead to any degree
- (1) The Greek reads, "which the not-lying God promised" or "which the trustworthy God promised."
- (2) This particular word for "trustworthy" is used only of God in the NT. It is one of several unique attributes which separates Him from mankind – which mark him as Holy.
- (a) Numbers 23:19
 God *is* not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?
- c) Paul gives three reasons why the promise of eternal life is "good as gold":
- (1) The promise is from God Himself.
- (2) The promise is from a source which cannot lie.
- (3) The promise was a high-priority in the plan of God by virtue of having been made from the very beginning – apparently before time itself existed.
- (4) The Greek here is somewhat difficult and reads: "before times of eons" or "before periods of eons."
- (a) KJV: "before the world began"
- (b) NASB: "long ages ago"
- (c) ESV: "before the ages began"

- (5) However it may be rendered in English, the phrase clearly indicates that the purpose of God to provide eternal life for the elect by way of redemption was a promise in His mind before creation itself and long before events played out in history.

C. Titus 1:3

1. "but has in due time manifested His word through preaching"

- a) Although the promise of eternal life is from eternity itself, predating history, the means by which it was to be attained was manifested within history.
- b) "in due time" reads literally, "in His own [opportune] time" - according to God's timetable.
- c) The idea here is very similar to what Paul writes in Galatians where he discusses the purpose of the Law of Moses prior to the completed work of Christ on the cross.

(1) Galatians 4:4-5

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

- d) God, being outside of time, had already determined many things, including the need and means by which eternal life would be attained by men. His purposes from eternity are not all played out instantly – He weaves them into the fabric of history according to "His own [opportune] time."
- e) In other words, God knows when and how to present what He wants man to know in a way which is optimal to His purposes.
- f) What did God do in His opportune time? He "manifested His Word through preaching"
 - (1) He caused His Word "to be made known," "to be shown."
 - (2) This refers to what we call Special Revelation – truth which could not be known by any other means than God revealing it directly to man through the Scriptures.
 - (3) We know this differs from General Revelation because General Revelation is truth which is available to all men in all ages and this passage tells us that His Word was not shown or made known until it suited His purpose.
 - (4) We also see here the idea of "progressive revelation" – that not all of God's Word was revealed at a single time in history. Instead, it was given through various individuals in various historical settings according to His ultimate purpose.
 - (5) Among the revelation given by God for our particular age, the age of the Church, is information specifically given through Paul, revealing truth which he refers to as "a mystery" – information now provided by God through Paul which was not revealed in earlier times. Times which were not "God's opportune time."

- g) "through preaching"

- (1) God has chosen to reveal His Word in two stages: 1) by revealing truth to chosen individuals (prophets, kings, apostles) who recorded what God revealed in written form, and 2) by raising up individuals to proclaim the previously revealed truth.
- (2) As an apostle, Paul was actively used in both of these stages of communication, but Titus and those of us who follow only operate in the second stage: we proclaim that which God has already revealed for our age.
 - (a) As John MacArthur observes, "We are waiters, not chefs." We don't cook the meal. Our business is to take the meal that God has already prepared and deliver it, unmodified, to the table where it can be eaten by the people of God.
- (3) The two primary means by which this is done is preaching and teaching.
 - (a) Although a precise distinction between preaching and teaching can't necessarily be maintained, it is helpful to consider them as two somewhat different categories of communication.
 - (b) Preaching emphasizes proclamation, generally to those who are unfamiliar with the message being communicated. The initial presentation of the gospel to those who have not heard would generally occur by way of preaching.
 - (c) Teaching conveys a more careful and systematic, or deeper, understanding of information which may have already been communicated in more introductory form. As such, it is more often the means by which believers who have already accepted the gospel grow in maturity and sanctification.
 - (d) Preaching the gospel over-and-over to people who already know and have accepted it does not lead to Christian maturity.
 - (e) On the other hand, attempting to teach systematic details about God's Word will generally be ineffective to those who have not first heard the gospel presentation and come to place their faith in Christ.

2. "which was committed to me according to the command of God"

- a) The word rendered "committed" here denotes the idea of "having been entrusted."
- b) The preaching of God's Word was given into Paul's hands by God with the expectation that Paul would be faithful with it.
- c) Paul was not free to do as he pleased, as a bondservant and apostle, he had also been entrusted with a commission to preach God's Word.
- d) This responsibility to preach the gospel was something that Paul did not take lightly. He mentions it when writing to the church at Corinth:

- (1) 1 Corinthians 9:16-17
For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.
 - (2) Paul saw his responsibility as a stewardship: as we all should.
 - (3) God has given His Word, it is our responsibility to promote its message, both geographically and temporally: worldwide and from generation to generation.
 - (4) This stewardship includes a responsibility to preserve the *understanding* - the proper interpretation of the message.
- e) When Paul refers to his stewardship as being "according to the command of God", he is not using a mere figure of speech.
- (1) In his defense before king Agrippa, Paul described his conversion on the road to Damascus
 - (2) Acts 26:15-18
"So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 'But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. 'I will deliver you from the *Jewish* people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, 'to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'
 - (3) Acts 9:20 - "Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God."
- f) Notice how Paul connects the promise of eternal life with his stewardship and responsibility to preach God's Word.
- (1) Although Paul understands the Biblical teaching of election, he also understands that God has chosen to use the preaching of His Word through mere mortals as a primary means by which people are saved.
 - (2) As Paul explained when writing to the church at Rome (Rom. 10:12-14):
For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?
3. In summary of the first 3 verses, Paul understood his stewardship and calling had two primary points of emphasis:
- a) 1 – To preach the gospel so that people who did not know God could call on the name of the Lord and be saved. This is his evangelistic ministry to the unsaved.

- b) 2 – To build the faith of the elect, those already saved, such that they would acknowledge the truth in such a way that it would affect their daily living. So that their lives would be “living epistles” read by others and the message which was read would speak “godliness.”

D. Titus 1:4

1. “To Titus, a true son in our common faith”

- a) Paul probably refers to Titus as a “true son” or “genuine son” because Titus came to faith under Paul's ministry.
- b) Elsewhere, in reference to the faith of Titus, Paul refers to him merely as a “brother” (2Cor. 2:13).

IV. Points Of Application

- A. Paul's election and the subsequent responsibility he felt to serve Christ and to preach God's Word should be a motivating factor in the life of every believer. We all have been “bought with a [precious] price” (1Cor. 6:20; 7:23) and are “not our own” (1Cor. 6:19).
 - 1. 2 Timothy 2:4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of [*this*] life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.
- B. Like Paul, we too have a stewardship – to preserve and present God's message in two primary venues:
 - 1. Preaching the good news of salvation in Christ to those who have not yet heard or responded (evangelization).
 - 2. Teaching the truths of God's Word to believers in order to equip and edify them – building them up in the faith.
 - 3. In order to do either one effectively, we ourselves must be equipped and edified in the faith by our own continued immersion in God's Word and in fellowship, prayer, and worship.
- C. Paul's introduction underscores his authority to instruct Titus and, through him, the fledgling fellowship of Christians on the island of Crete.
 - 1. God's design for the Christian church, as we shall see in our subsequent study of the book of Titus, involves an authority structure with plural elders guiding local fellowships. Christianity outside of these parameters is in disobedience to God's design.
 - a) The modern idea that it can be “just me and God and the internet” as a way of fulfilling one's duty for Christian fellowship is both unbiblical and dangerous.
 - b) [Talk about the deception such believers often labor under.]

V. References

- ABD David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 2:1076 (New York: Doubleday, 1996, c1992).
- Unger Merrill Frederick Unger, R. K. Harrison, Howard Frederic Vos et al., *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Revision of: Unger's Bible dictionary. 3rd ed. c1966., Rev. and updated ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988).