

May 24, 2009

Titus 1:1

Alright good morning – of course I'm glad that you are here today. Grab your Bibles and turn to Titus chapter 1 with me. We started our study of this letter of and to Titus last week. We looked at how this letter from Paul is different from the one to the Colossians we just finished studying. Titus was with Paul when he came to the island of Crete and began to share and spread the gospel but when it came time for Paul to move on, the believers there were not organized enough into local churches to successfully continue, so verse 5 says Paul left Titus in Crete to finish what was unfinished – to appoint elders in every town – basically to establish the Christian churches in Crete.

And that's what Titus is about – it is written from Paul to Titus but intended for the people of Crete to read or hear so that Paul could empower Titus – could delegate apostolic authority to Titus – and to lay out God's plan for that process of establishing the church.

So we are coming to Titus with that goal – to let God's Word inform us about His blueprint for His Church.

What we saw last week in the first half of verse 1 was that in the process of empowering Titus to carry out his task, Paul does not use himself as the source of Titus's authority, but his sender. The only credentials Paul offers is that he is a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ – and in that we see his commitment to God's lordship – God's mastery over his life. Servant – doulos in Greek – is a slave and meant Paul was serving with no regard for his own interest – no will or agenda of his own. Just submission to God. Apostle – apostolos – is not an elevated term – it simply means messenger. Paul is saying "I am under God's authority and my task is to deliver the message that Jesus Christ commands." His whole life was in submission to that – he didn't set his own goals – he didn't pursue his own glory – the principle of God's lordship was the core of his life that affected everything.

And what we saw last week is that what is true of Paul in that regard is fundamental to what it means to be a Christian and foundational to what it means to be His church.

If Titus is a compact blueprint for God's Church, then in these opening lines as Paul describes his ministry, we have a blueprint within the blueprint. And the next part has to do with purpose or goals, if you will. Let's go back to **verse 1**.

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.

Did you catch it? **The reason that Paul is a servant and apostle – the goal of his living under the mastery of God - is for the FAITH of God's elect and for their knowledge of the truth that leads to GODLINESS.**

That is a very straight forward and specific expression of the will of God for his ministry – and the ministry of the church. And man is it compact. What we have here and in verse 2 we could spend probably 5 months preaching on. Don't worry, though we could – I won't. Because remember we are coming to Titus to see how God wants us as His church to be established. So let's look at the first one. Paul says I live under the authority of God – and so is Titus by the way – for the faith of God's elect. What does that mean? Listen closely here.

Here's what he means. To bring the elect to the point of saving faith. **The first purpose – the first goal – is to bring the elect to the point of SAVING faith.** "Those chosen of God" is actually the translation there: "for the faith of those chosen by God" – the ones the Lord has chosen for salvation. Paul's ministry is aimed at – he is a messenger for their faith because **the elect are not redeemed (saved) until hearing God's truth ACTIVATES their faith.** So Paul says I have been sent to preach the truth which activates the faith which saves the elect. He was for the faith of those chosen by God.

You could turn back one maybe two pages to **2 Timothy 2:10** and you see Paul's heart expressed there as well when he says

“Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.”

Simply stated, that’s the first point – Paul says I’ll endure anything to get the elect saved. He was committed to evangelism.

By referring to Christians as God’s elect, Paul uses a descriptive term that draws attention to GOD’S activity in our salvation – theologically known as ‘election.’ This doctrine is not exclusively Paul’s idea – it reflects the teaching of Jesus as well as several other NT writers. Divine election is a basic element in the doctrine of salvation. And although it contains mysteries for human understanding, election is biblically emphasized as a central part of God’s dealing with his people.

This actual Greek phrase here in Titus is also used in **Romans 8:33** when Paul says *“who is going to bring any charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies.”* And then again in **Colossians 3:12** if you’ll think back a month or so ago to where Paul writes *“Therefore as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved”* and then goes on to lay out how we are to act towards each other.

But it is a well known OT term. Several times – in Deuteronomy for example – Israel is described as God’s elect- the chosen of God. But now there is a new group – a new people – a new church chosen of God. And Paul’s goal was to bring those chosen of God to saving faith through the preaching of the gospel.

Now I don’t want to get bogged down on this word or even this issue here because it is not the point of the passage, it is a stepping stone to the point; but there may be those of you who are thinking “Now are you saying that people who come to salvation are saved because God chose them to be saved?” And as John MacArthur responds – so do I. “I’m not saying that – the Bible is – and I’m just echoing it.” It is obvious and all through Scripture.

I won’t spend a lot of time on it, but just to remind you of some scriptures that are pretty explicit. Jesus in **John 15:16** *“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last.”* You didn’t choose me – I chose you.

You move to the book of **Acts chapter 13:46-48**: *“Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.””*

When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.” All those appointed – all those chosen for eternal life – believed.

You go from Jesus to Acts to Romans and starting in **Romans 9:13**

“Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!

For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”

It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.” It doesn’t depend on a man’s will or a man’s running but on God who has mercy. It’s God’s choice.

You move to **Ephesians chapter 1:3-4** *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world...”*

I’m just hitting some samples here, you go to 1 Thessalonians 1 and it says we are loved by God and chosen by Him. Then in **2 Thessalonians** the same thing in **chapter 2:13** *“... from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.”*

We'll see a little more about this as we move through Titus, but go back to our text this morning and remember this is just a stepping stone to the first point here. Paul says in verse 1 that he is a servant of God – an apostle or messenger of Christ – for the faith of God's elect.

That divine choice that God made in eternity past is activated in time by personal faith. You begin to understand Paul's focus here is that they're chosen of God but I have been sent for the activation of their faith.

Folks – look at me – that's what we all do. We as believers are all in the world – we are all under God's authority – His Lordship – for that. That's the Great Commission – Jesus said: go into all the world – preach the gospel – make disciples. Why? Because God wants to use you – God established His church as the means to bring the message that activates the faith of His elect. They can't be saved without personal faith – **Ephesians 2:8-9** – *it is by grace you are saved through faith.*

What we see here is awesome. The simplicity of the ministry is its genius. God's elect will respond to the gospel. **The knowledge of the gospel elicits FAITH in the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of those chosen by God.** Not only is that Paul's goal, **that is the goal of any CHRISTIAN - and that's the first part of the purpose – the mission – the goal in God's blueprint of his CHURCH.** That means something crucial for each of us and for all of us together that we'll come back to in a moment.

But understand, that's not the end. That – as awesome as it is – is only the first part. Paul says *“for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.”*

All too often in our evangelistic efforts to produce faith, we have neglected the hard work of encouraging the knowledge of the truth. Because the results of our evangelism, at least used to be, easily measured by recording the decisions and baptisms, churches became content with what the statistical data called 'success.' Warren Weirsbe describes that reality as “substituting statistical records for spiritual reality which is something like reading the recipe instead of eating the meal.”

Cultivating that knowledge of truth is not so easily defined or measured – it is much more disciplined and difficult and even undramatic in its process. But as AW Tozer points out “The Christian is strong or weak depending upon how closely he has cultivated the knowledge of God. Paul was anything but an advocate of the once-done, automatic school of Christianity. He devoted his whole life to the art of knowing Christ.”

So it makes sense then when we look in Titus 1 that we see the other side of his purpose. Paul says his job was to bring the gospel that saves so that faith could be produced in those who are elect and then to bring the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness. So he's saying, yes – the knowledge of truth, of course, starts at salvation – that's the gospel – but that is not and cannot be the end. It continues through sanctification. **Sanctification is the part of salvation – listen – it is the part of being saved that we LIVE in – that we are partners with God in – that we grow in to be like Jesus. The knowledge that leads to salvation leads to the knowledge the produces GODLINESS.**

Folks this is going to be a huge component throughout Titus because it is a huge component – not only of Paul's ministry – but of God's blueprint *for* ministry – God's plan for his church – for you and me. In fact everything – **everything else that we do as his church either has this “knowledge of truth that leads to godliness” as its GOAL or is the RESULT of it.** It is the basis of everything.

Romans 12:2 says that we are transformed – we who are saved – we who claim to be believers – are transformed – changed – made new so that we are no longer the same – we are no longer like everyone else in the world we live in – *we are transformed by the renewing of our mind.*

At our deacons' meeting just two weeks ago, we talked about this very thing: that renewing our minds means at the very least that we replace the old way of thinking with scripture – with God's truth

– with a biblical way of thinking – so that, as you go on in Romans 12 – so that we can know God’s will

That’s exactly what we saw in Colossians chapter three – I pointed it out in summary just like 3 weeks ago – in **Colossians 3:10** that this new self that starts in true salvation, it says, “*is being renewed in knowledge in the image*” of Jesus. That **there is obviously more to the Christian life than knowledge, but there is no GROWTH in the Christian life without it.**

You say ok – that sounds fine. But we have to get this in seriousness. There must be growth. Let me just simple it up here – things that are alive grow. Things that are dead don’t. **If there is no spiritual growth – if there is no practical application – in us – then there is no spiritual LIFE in us.** Why?

Because the Holy Spirit of God has two basic jobs. In the process of pointing to Jesus, He convicts us of sin and He leads us into truth. And truth changes us. So when it comes to our lives individually, if there is no change – if there is no growth, there is no truth. If there is no truth, there is no Holy Spirit. And if there is no Holy Spirit, there is no salvation, because God clearly says the presence of the Holy Spirit in us is the guarantee of our current and future salvation. So unless a person dies the day after they come to faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, there must and will be growth in godliness.

So Paul says my first purpose is for the faith of God’s elect – my second is for the elect’s knowledge of truth that leads to godliness. Notice again here – as we saw all through the last half of Colossians – the inseparability of justification and sanctification – of salvation and godliness. And notice the how – **there is an intimate connection between TRUTH and godliness** – Paul calls it the “truth that leads to godliness.”

Any knowledge of this truth – to know, to understand, to grasp, to believe truth will change us – will lead to godliness. In fact John MacArthur says it like this: “Any possession of the truth that does not lead an individual to live a godly life to one degree or another is a spurious profession.” In other words just as blunt as all get out, don’t tell me you are saved if you have no desire to be sanctified. And don’t tell me you believe this truth if it is not progressively and persistently showing up in your life.

And that also is going to be a key to our study of Titus. Already historically in the situation where Titus is in Crete, there are false teachers just like there were among the Colossians trying to distort God’s truth. This letter is going to address them clearly – in fact we’ll see it in chapter 1, it is alluded to in chapter 2, and then we’ll see it again in chapter 3. And the key is that the condemnation of the false teachers is related to the failure of their teaching to produce godliness. In other words, they are wrong at the very least because what they teach doesn’t make us more like Jesus. You can tell error by what it produces. **You can tell the truth or its absence by what it PRODUCES.**

So Paul is saying the other half of ministry is bringing about the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.

So again – remember the blueprint within the blueprint here – Paul’s ministry is one of complete submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ – the mastery of God – for the purpose – toward the goal of the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.

So let me just walk you very quickly through a few levels of **application** here – and these are crucial so hang with me.

On an ‘us’ level – **if are going to be the local church** – the body of Christ **here at Fairway that God wants us to be** – that he established us for – then we are to be about evangelism and edification – salvation and sanctification – the gospel and godliness. Listen to me – **we must hold up – hold out**

– magnify – lift up – exalt – glorify – **JESUS and His Word in EVERYTHING.** What does that mean? It means it is not about you and it is not about me. It means ‘church’ is not about what we think or what we want or what makes us comfortable – it is about holding up and out Jesus Christ and His Word for the faith of the elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness and anything else – anything less – and we cease to be his church – we cease to exist in God’s blueprint.

Now for the most part we say amen – alright – because that feels impersonal – that feels weightless because it seems to fall on some ambiguous ‘us’ that is too easily put off onto the deacons or the teachers or the staff or me or some group that is not you individually. But let me warn you now - Titus is going to take that perspective away from us before too long. But for now understand that God is explaining this blueprint for the ‘us’ through the individual life of Paul.

As much as there is an entity that is Fairway Baptist Church – that church is made up of you and you and you and me. Hear it again **we are the church. So the goal of the church is the goal of OUR LIVES.** We are to be under the mastery of Jesus Christ for the faith of the elect and for their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.

Listen Paul knew that it wasn’t his cleverness that saved people. He knew that it wasn’t his uniqueness of style that converted people. He knew it wasn’t the depth of his ability to reason and preach that brought about godliness. What he knew was the simple truth of Jesus Christ when it hit the heart of those chosen by God it brought about faith and conversion. What he knew was that when the elect knew the truth that leads to godliness it led to godliness.

So he tells the Corinthians in **1 Corinthians chapter 1** that he was determined to know nothing while he was among them except Jesus Christ and him crucified. He says I didn’t come to you with words of my wisdom – I didn’t come to you with my wisdom – but God’s wisdom – God’s truth that was destined for our glory before time began.

People, does that describe you? **Is that one of the primary ways in which you view YOUR life?** Does that match your understanding of why you have the job you have – the friendships you have – the relations you have – **that you might bring Jesus Christ and then the truth of God that brings godliness into YOUR world?** If that is not true in me – if that is not true in you – then so far in our lives we have missed a vast majority of the plan. We can’t wait till our friend has cancer before we tell him about Jesus. We can’t wait till their choices have flushed their futures – till their addictions have destroyed their lives – we can’t wait till we feel comfortable and it is easy to confront someone in their sin – to tell them what is right and wrong and best – to point to a biblical view of life.

Which brings me to the last and most personal and primary level of application today. To you and to me in you and in me.

The reason that Paul says he is for the faith of the elect is because it is only by faith that anyone is saved. Is that what you are basing your salvation on?

Again Ephesians 2 says it is by grace through faith alone that we are saved. If your hope of forgiveness – if your hope of eternal life – if your basis for salvation is anything about you – it is not salvation. It doesn’t matter whether it is the fact that you are not as bad as other people. It doesn’t matter if it is the fact that you go to church – that you give money to good causes – that you were baptized as a baby or baptized as an adult – none of that is the basis for salvation. It is faith alone. **Do you understand and believe that the ONLY way for anyone to right with a holy God – to be forgiven – to be given life now and in heaven forever – is by placing all your hope in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and then living based on that FAITH?** Is that where you need to start today?

And then the reason why Paul is for the knowledge of truth that leads to godliness is because that is as much of the process of our salvation as that faith was in the first place. So is that happening in your life?

Peter says it this way in **2 Peter** that God has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Jesus. Are you growing in that knowledge? Do you have an increasing grasp on more and more of that truth? How do you tell? **Is your life PROGRESSING in godliness – are you becoming more and more in line with what you know of this Word?** Is it impossible for you to come here week after week and hear the truth that leads to godliness and not be changed by it? It ought to be. In fact, what we are beginning to see is that **if the Holy Spirit is truly in us, this 30 minutes on Sunday morning will never be ENOUGH.** We will want more – **we will PURSUE the knowledge of God's truth that makes us more like Jesus every way we can.**

Look at me and let me just nutshell this for you:

Is there faith – is there godliness *in you*?

Are you *for* the faith and for the godliness of others?

That is the only way that we as the church will be established according to the blueprint of God so that we too are for the faith of God's elect and our knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.

May it be more and more on every level because we were here today.

Let's pray.