



**"...set in order
the things that are
lacking."**

- Titus chapter 1

**by Pastor Tim Dodson
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*I 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, 2 in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, 3 but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior; 4 To Titus, a true son in [our] common faith: Grace, mercy, [and] peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. 5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you— 6 if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, 8 but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. 10 For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, 11 whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. 12 One of them, 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 giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. 15 To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. 16 They profess to know God, but in works they deny [Him,] being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

The Letter to Titus is a letter to a bit of a “mystery man.” For we know very little about this guy except a few details really and an occasional passing mention. Paul records in Galatians 2:3 that he was Greek, so we know therefore he was Gentile. It seems, all things being considered, that Titus was perhaps one of the first converts to Christianity that did not pass through the “hoop” of Judaism along the way. He apparently took the most direct route!

What we can gather through scripture is that Titus was a committed friend of Paul's. That counts for a lot in ministry when, truth be told, pastors can really count on very few to be there when the game gets rough. We know he was a passionate servant because it seems that whenever he was mentioned he was ‘geared up’ and ‘on the move.’ It was Titus who carried the “bombshell” letters from Paul to the Corinthians. It was Titus who stayed in Crete to “set things in order” there, and to “ordain elders in every city.” We read in Galatians 2 that Titus went up to Antioch with Paul and Barnabus to answer questions concerning the recent converts amongst the Gentiles. He no doubt served as “proof” of the work of the Holy Spirit as well as that of Paul.

Certainly, it was clear that he was a trusted colleague and a proven man of God. It seems that Titus served God and Paul in a sort of “assistant pastor” role. He was the “follow up man,” after Paul moved on, organizing and establishing those churches that Paul had planted throughout Asia. Titus apparently did not receive a lot of glory, but did find a lot of fruit!

Titus no doubt endured the same onslaught of Satan that all true and committed servant’s experience. But those men who are the ‘first in’ to plant and structure a new work are bound to be spiritually beaten up at times. At many times actually! It seemed however that Titus dealt with a couple of unique issues: one, the extreme influence of the teachers of Judaism, and two, the weaselly character of the Cretans. Both of these issues mandated an astute nature in Titus...a demand that he “stay on his toes” all the time.

Sadly, the churches in Crete that Titus dealt with battled much of the same “demons” that we in the greater church still fight today. For there continues even today the ongoing war between law and grace that Titus endured, as well as the attacks that ensue forth from advocates of each side. The “ebb and flow” of this often ‘fluid’ issue seems to move with the times, seeking always to create a comfortable and politically correct form of Christianity for the present age. It took, *and takes*, consistent attentiveness and absolute commitment to the grace of Jesus Christ to avoid sliding into the strange and false comfort of rules...of law. One must “*stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*”

This letter from Paul to Titus is similar in nature and design to that of 1 Timothy. Both letters were written to young pastor/servants in the mission field. Both letters detail the “right stuff” so required of those who would be appointed to offices within the church. And both warn of the dangers that face those same servants within the church, as well as out. In both cases, Paul reminds these servants of their responsibilities, as well as the challenges that come with the position. Just like now, there was expectations and even more so, demands...requirements, that must be fulfilled in order to hold the offices of the church.

Chapter 1

1:1

In Paul’s day, a person ‘signed his letter’ at the beginning rather than the end. So Paul lets us know right off just who the author is; a servant,...a “bond slave” really, an apostle, of Jesus Christ. This was Paul’s identity! A life given in service to the son of God.

“according to the faith of God’s elect”

Immediately Paul pushes out to the front and center, the heart of his calling, and the focus of his letter to Titus: we are saved “by grace through faith.” For Paul, this is where the ‘buck stopped.’ Paul was just going to stand on the truth, without fear, favor, or apology. Thus Paul is immediately at odds with a world today that is far more concerned with what’s easy, what’s expedient, what’s politically correct, than what is actually the truth!

That’s the thing about Paul...he always put it out there...truth without dilution or distortion. It was that truth that seemingly got Paul into constant trouble and consistently dangerous situations. Certainly, he could have simply “toned it down” and no doubt would have walked in greater worldly safety and likely even saw greater success in raw numbers. (at least at first) But for Paul, there was never any room for compromise...no fear of offense. Jesus said that He literally was the “the truth.” So without flinching, Paul preached Jesus - the “*living truth.*”

1:2

The word “hope” in our day has a very different meaning than what is implied herein. The biblical use of this term does not imply insecurity or mere desire as it does today. “Hope” in Paul’s letters instead convey the idea

of “confident faith and expectation.” (1John 2:25, John 3:15, 1John 5:13, Matt 25:34) As redeemed children of God, we do not merely “hope,” as in today’s sense of the word, for something that God promised; we stand on it!

“So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us.” (Heb 6:18)

Scripture tells us that God is “*the same yesterday, today, and forever.*” He cannot lie, He speaks the truth, He is “the truth.” In Numbers 23:19 we read, “*God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind.*” And He has been thus before the world even began! For “in the beginning was the Word... and the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us.”

1:3

All of God’s works are completed “in due time.” That’s His time, not ours. He has a plan and it will come to pass in His good time.

He has “manifested His word through preaching.” Note what Paul is saying here. For his words run directly against the modern tide of religious isolationists and Christian “Rambo’s” who today seek to “go it alone” and want no fellowship or community to “weigh them down.”

So many want to deny the place of the preacher within the realm of faith and maturity. These are usually the same folks who want also to write off the organized church as archaic and unnecessary to the exercise of one’s growing faith. And that is just what Satan would like of us! “Divide and conquer” is his methodology. Yet Paul declares not only God’s purpose and intent through pastoral preaching, but also declares his own divine calling to do so.

Ro 10:14 *“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?”*

John the Baptist preached (Matt 3:1), Jesus preached (Matt 4:23, 9:35, Mark 1:14), the apostles preached (Luke 9:6), Paul preached (Acts 15:35), and thus I preach...

So you can hold to your ‘group led home church’ if you want, just as long as you understand that such is not biblical. Which is clearly taught in the pastoral epistles like Titus.

1:4

It is generally understood that sometime in the past, Paul had been the one to lead Titus to Christ. Such an event in any two people’s lives is bound to create an eternal bond of friendship and brotherhood.

“the common faith” – or “that which belonged to all.” Again, Paul perpetuates the concepts of community and fellowship...of ‘body life’ and unity. There is no escaping it. Such was and IS to be the manifest of Jesus inside us! Christianity cannot be lived out alone!

Now with his signature declaration, Paul says ‘hello.’ Apart from grace there is no mercy, and apart from mercy there is no peace. All are necessary. All are attributes of our loving Savior. There is one faith open to all men. NOT **all faiths**, but only one faith to be common to all, that “desires that all men might be saved.” Jesus is not a

door...a way...a good shepherd...a life, but He is THE door...THE way...THE good shepherd...THE life. He is THE bread, THE light, THE water! He stands alone as the path to God.

1:5

We don't have any detailed record of Paul's time in Crete, nor the initial planting of the church there. But we can gather from this that when Paul left Crete, perhaps hurriedly (as often was the case), he left Titus to complete the work of organizing the church and to do the things he had not completed himself. Scripture tells us that our God is a God of order, thus His church would be of course be operated in the same consistent manner. That would include the offices of pastor, elder, and deacon to name a few.

Again this set up flies in the face of the modern "re-inventing" of the structure of the church to make it more democratic...socialistic even. The idea that everyone would vote, and all would share in a corporate 'round table' that was absent of a pastor and shepherd. This of course is expected in an age of blogging and internet comment pages on news sights. Everyone has something to say, and believes their view is as valid as the next, even if they really know nothing about the subject.

"elder" means "overseer." This would encompass both what we would commonly think of as a pastor, as well as our modern position of elder within the church body. All of our elders here are "overseers" in some large capacity.

"as I had commanded you"

We do not know precisely the process that Paul used, though we do know that Paul "ordained" Titus as well as others. Certainly a man's calling must come from God firstly, but we cannot disregard men and the greater church "coming along side" another to both recognize his calling and to support and train him for meeting the challenges he will face in ministry. This is not some modern denominational hierarchy. It is the precedent...the guide that was laid out in scripture for us to follow when planting and operating a local church.

Paul obviously wasn't the "church king" nor was he a micromanager. He was humble enough to let others personally and materially participate in the church plant. Paul trusted his colleagues to do right by God and scripture when setting up the no doubt tedious albeit necessary governmental structures that had to exist for there to be order. But he also wasn't simply letting the chips fall where they may. Notice he says "as I commanded you." So there WAS a plan to be followed.

1:6

Paul, *as he did in his letters to Timothy*, herein describes the man that was to be considered for the post of Elder. In light of all of scripture, we would be hard-pressed to believe that verse 6 here is the totality of the requirements of recognizing and appointing an elder within the church. These were merely the beginning perimeters of this process. Many other qualities and qualifications would come into play, as covered elsewhere in Scripture, as well as God's sovereign calling and direction concerning each individual. But here we are given the "short list" some repeated from the Letters to Timothy, some new, and some given emphasis and clarity.

The original King James renders this as a man "above reproach." Meaning that his 'street cred' was righteous. He had a Godly reputation and history. Time had proven his muster.

He had "one wife." This is often interpreted as excluding any that have been previously divorced. But if such an extreme position is taken, then it would therefore have to exclude remarried widowers too. And it would have to effectively exalt the sin of divorce to a 'higher' sin than others and basically unforgivable. But God says when

we are reborn, He “throws our sins as far as the east is from the west” and “He remembers them no more.” (Ps 103:12, Jer 31:34)

In that day it was not uncommon to have more than one wife at a time. This is what Paul was prohibiting. Yet an ongoing divorce situation or one happening while a confessed believer—that would be a problem. The elder was also to have “faithful children.”

His children must be well behaved and disciplined. This is a common abuse of scripture as a lot of pastors will ignore it. This has been interpreted to mean little children only, but I’m not inclined to take that position for when scripture and Christ Himself speak elsewhere concerning “still-at-home” little children, he uses a different word or words.

1:7-9

A “bishop”...or for our understanding, a “pastor,” must also be “blameless” as are the Elders. This speaks of one not able to be called on a transgression; he stands unaccused. Plenty of people will accuse a pastor of a lot of things, but will they do so in an official gathering or hearing as scripture demands we do in such situations? If not, it generally speaks of an issue with the accuser not the accused.

“steward” means one who manages the house. He is a servant and a caretaker. There is also a business ability implied herein, and is necessary in such a role.

“self-willed” means self-pleasing and arrogant.

“given to wine” means not a drunkard.

“violent” or KJV a “striker” means a fighter, one who is contentious, argues, and seeks to battle those around him.

“not greedy for money” or not controlled by the lust for money

“hospitality” means open and hospitable, generous to guests and people he meets.

“lover of what is good” speaks of the friends and acquaintances that he has, as well as the things he is drawn to personally, privately, as well as publicly.

“sober” means a sound mind, a steady level head and self-controlled.

“just” means righteous and upright.

“holy” means “free from knowing sin, and the habit of sin.” A desire for and a direction toward being like Jesus in all things.

“self-controlled” means just that...in control of one’s self, restrained.

A pastor/elder is to hold to the pure Word of God. Please note this! Because this is a serious issue today as pastors have abandoned the Word as the sovereign guide for the church and for mankind as a whole. He is not to deviate, or alter from the pure doctrine of scripture. Scripture lays down a serious note here on this subject. He is also not to put up with anyone else who would teach otherwise. Not even an angel! (Gal 1:8)

“*as he has been taught*” tells us that the overseer must not be a novice or untrained in the Word and its practice. He must be firmly established in the truth of the Word and be unmovable. He must be able to both correct and convince those who come against the Word. And there is clearly room for training from those who are his mentors and teachers.

1:10-11

The original KJV renders this “unruly and vain talkers.” “vain talkers” means empty talkers...speaking but saying nothing except perhaps “look at me, I’m so great.” Sadly, once again, this is a problem. Self-righteousness is a hearty and resilient foe of Christianity.

Even within the pastorate. The lies I have heard come off the lips of those who claim the pulpit is astonishing.

There will always be those who profess with their lips, but deny with their lives. The mention herein “especially those of the circumcision” tells us that the issue will often come from those who claim the mantle of religion and even pastoral authority. Both then and now.

We should take a lesson from Paul here as to the attitude to have concerning “unruly and vain talkers.” The Greek word used here for “stopped” is not found anywhere else in Scripture. This is a singular emphatic use, for a singular emphatic case: “Restrain, bridle in, put to silence or muzzle.”

I don't go out of my way to tangle with these guys, but when God puts them in my path I will call them out. How do we know therefore who to trust in light of such an environment? Transparency is a big plus. Hiding, ducking, avoiding honest discussion is a sure giveaway that what you have there is a weasel. Such a battle should be fought on the ground of the pure Word. For it is “sharper than a two-edged sword.” (Eph 5:11)

“*For the sake of dishonest gain*” can mean more than trying to get some sort of financial payout. We certainly see those guys out there on TV, but some guys will do anything, say anything, in order to be able to hold the position and have a flock. It's a power thing more than a money thing. So the bottom line is that there will always be those guys out there, and while we all have plenty of shortcomings to personally deal with, we still should not simply let evil stand without speaking up. To do so is a serious breach in loving others. If we DO love them, we will say something! If there is simply a miscommunication or misunderstanding, then let's sit down and talk it out. That is God's mandate.

1:12-13

“Prophet” here may be a poor translation. This word used here in the original is also translated elsewhere as “poet”.

Paul doesn't have much good to say about these guys. But then, neither did Jesus. He held his strongest rebuke and harshest criticisms for those who knew better yet use their cloak of religion as a way to personal power or gain.

“*rebuke sharply*”

Paul knew well the danger facing the church there, and he knew they could not afford to be passive and purposely blind. There is a time, *for the sake of the flock*, that a man of God must deal with things with a heavy hand. Meek yes, but weak no. A pastor needs to have some backbone. To quote Wiersbe, “The church is a body, and the pastor must occasionally be a ‘spiritual physician’ and set some bones.”

It is popular thinking today that a pastor should be soft and gentle in all circumstances. A verifiable milk-toast. But that is not the “men of God” in the Bible. This idea of pastoral hyper-passivity comes from our desire to continue in sin and division free from chastening. Again, transparency and an openness is what is needed to keep everyone honest and aboveboard.

These guys are elsewhere called “wolves.” Not puppies or hamsters! They are serious predators, and should be dealt with as such!

1:14

“Jewish fables” probably refers to the mystical superstitions and traditions of the Jewish church that bore no truth. One of the devil's greatest ploys is to mix a little fable with a lot of truth. But like the yeast that Paul

speaks of, that little untruth works its way through the whole of the body of Christ, and ultimately corrupts the whole body. Such acts like a cancer. It starts small, but corrupts and finally kills. It cannot be ignored nor minimized. It has to be cut out...

1:15

This verse is not a license sin...to indulge in whatever we please because we are born again. For those who are born again are instructed elsewhere to “come up from amongst them and be ye separate”, as well as “be holy , as I am holy.” What it does do is to reinforce the understanding that as Christians we are free from a path of “righteousness through the law...through rule keeping.”

Jesus saves us, keeps us saved, and makes us righteous by belonging to Him. We cannot be saved or righteous by works or ritual. (Eph 2:8) Note that this passage does not free us from doctrine and direction given elsewhere in scripture. It releases us from legalism and non-Biblical issues, and any attempt to stand in God’s presence through our own works.

But for unbeliever, nothing is pure. Whether an action is morally evil and fleshly, or moral and kind, or even religious! It means nothing, because their hearts are not, they cannot, be pure and right concerning that action. *“Without Christ, we can do nothing.”*

1:16

This, in follow up to the previous verse, is clarification. While works do not make us right in the sight of God, they do however show we are right before God! “Fruit production” in a believer is not an option. It is evidence of a changed life. (Note John 15, Eph 2:10)

What is the baseline therefore in this chapter’s message? Scripture. Without such we are flying by the seat of our pants. We are simply making it up as we go along. And that is as descriptive of much of the greater church today as it was for Titus there in Crete.

Paul was saying “don’t let it happen.” Fight for what is right. Stand on what is truth, and reject the rest. This is a very serious message for everyone who claims to be a child of God today. Do we deny God by our works or lives, and yet continue to call ourselves a believer?

Many of us frankly “deny Him” every day in the living out of our lives. We speak the right things, but our lives say something totally different. We cannot...*for the sake of our very soul*, separate the two.