

Introduction to Titus

Call to Worship: Psalm 117

1st Scripture: Ephesians 1:1-14

2nd Scripture: Titus 1:1-4

Hymn Insert- *Come People of the Risen King*

Hymn Insert- *Speak O Lord*

Hymn Insert- *Amazing Love*

Introduction

This morning, we begin our new trek into Paul's Letter to Titus. Before unraveling the Apostle's introductory greeting and words, I want to give a brief synopsis of some of the background information that will help us get a better appreciation and understanding for the Epistle.

I. Background Information

1. Time and Place of Writing: Paul writes this letter sometime between his first and second Roman imprisonments. At the end of the Book of Acts, we find Paul under house arrest in Rome, where he remains for a significant period of time. However, he is eventually freed and does some more traveling and missions work until a few years later, when he is arrested again, brought back to Rome, and ultimately beheaded under the tyranny of Nero. Paul writes this letter sometime, not long before, his second and final Roman imprisonment (therefore, pre-2 Timothy). In other words, he writes as a free man. In chapter 3:12, Paul orders Titus, "be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there." This also shows us that Paul was either in Nicopolis when he wrote this, or at the very least, heading there. [If you head east from Rome and cross the Adriatic Sea, once you hit land, you will be in Nicopolis (A western city of Greece)]

2. Destination and Purpose of Letter: Paul writes this letter to Titus, who is presently in Crete, which is a long, skinny island, south of Greece (south east of Achaia and Corinth), stretching across a large section of the Aegean Sea, below and between Greece and Asia. Paul has sent Titus to help establish the church there, similar to what he has done with Timothy at Ephesus. That said, Paul is sending Artemis or Tychicus to Crete to relieve Titus, so that,

Titus can come to meet Paul at Nicopolis. In chapter 3:12, we are told, “When I send Artemis to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis.” And so, Titus’s purpose for being at Crete was temporal, which brings us to the main purpose of the letter.

Paul’s main purpose with this Epistle was to exhort Titus to fulfill his mission at Crete, by setting up elders there, to help establish the church/es, so that, it would be protected from false teachings and dangerous, gospel-destroying influences, most particularly coming from Judaistic intrusions. Notice, in verse 5, Paul states, “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...”. Immediately following this (vs. 6-9), Paul lists the qualifications for elders, as a means of helping Titus accomplish this critical task.

Then, notice the most significant reason for this important task, given in what Paul states in verses 10-11. “FOR there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.” And so, for the moment, brethren, we can note, just by the purpose of this letter, that elders also serve the purpose of protecting the doctrine of the church from heretical intrusions, which would ultimately destroy the church. That aspect of the necessity of good, biblical, qualified leadership comes to the foreground in a powerful way in this Epistle.

Before moving on, it is also worthy to note, that once again, we will find how doctrine is the source of all behavior. Paul will address important roles within the body, but again, he does so, as that which springs out of pure doctrine (Skim read chapter 2:1-10, emphasizing verse 1).

And finally, we will also find Paul utilizing the indicative/imperative model of exhortation throughout this letter. In other words, he will surround his commands to Titus and the church/es at Crete with compelling, motivating, strength-providing reminders of what God has done for us, in Christ, as the ultimate means of driving the people of God to obey from the heart. The gospel, and not the law, is the source of all power unto obedience. The gospel motivates law keeping, leading us to make proper use of the law, without disregarding or doing away with it, as sadly, some would do, because of their misunderstanding of this gospel/law

connection. A wonderful picture of the proper connection between works/obedience as a product of grace is seen in portions of this letter (Skim read chapter 2:11-15; 3:1-8).

3. Recipient of Letter: Finally, who is Titus? Before we complete our synopsis of the background information that surrounds this letter, it would do us good to consider *who it is* that Paul is writing to? Now, in many ways, we might think of Titus as similar to Timothy, who was Paul's protege, but what's profoundly interesting is that while Titus is present during some significant points in Paul's ministry, his name is nowhere mentioned in the entire Book of Acts! He's definitely present there, as we will see in a few moments, but just not mentioned directly in the Book itself.

In fact, if you recall that very important, ground breaking meeting at the Jerusalem counsel, where it was decided that Gentiles did not have to be circumcised (Acts 15), Titus was there and he was one of the very subjects of that discussion. We know this, because of what we are told in Galatians 2:1-5 (Read now). Needless to say, Titus was a gentile Christian, who was trained unto leadership (and very likely converted) by the Apostle Paul (Titus 1:4).

While presently in Crete, and as we saw in 2 Timothy, later sent into Dalmatia, most of what we find surrounding the ministry of Titus, involves his work in the very difficult and troublesome church of Corinth. Titus is mentioned numerous times in 2 Corinthians. In fact, he was thoroughly involved with the transferring of information between Paul and the Corinthians, attempting to aid in bringing about reconciliation, repentance, peace...etc. [Read 2 Cor. 2:12-13; 7:6-9, 13-16; 8:6, 16-24; 12:16-18]

Needless to say, Titus was definitely a man who was tested in the ministry, and found persevering and faithful. He was involved with some of the most difficult conflicts surrounding Paul's contentions with the sinning brethren at Corinth.

Having then, this general background information in mind, let us now look at Paul's introductory greeting and words to Titus in verses 1-4.

II. Introductory Greeting and Words (vs. 1-4)

“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” (vs. 1-4).

Now, once again, what we find in this introductory greeting is that Paul’s words are particularly suited for that which he is going to address in the body of the letter. Here, the Apostle reveals a direct link from his specific calling to a general explanation of what exactly that call entails, which ties right into the precise responsibility that Titus has been given to fulfill at Crete. And so, in connecting Paul’s entire ministerial calling to the general description of what that call entails, Paul is highlighting the importance of Titus’s responsibility at Crete, which relates directly to Paul’s entire calling. By this means, then, Paul is in essence saying, “Titus, the responsibilities that you have been given there at Crete are by no means peripheral responsibilities. Rather, they spring out of the very substance and essence of my calling as an Apostle, and yours as a minister of Christ Jesus, our Lord.

What then is the specific calling of Paul? Paul is “a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ.” Once a servant of his own fleshly desires, under the tyrannical rule of Satan, Paul has now been redeemed by God, through the bloody atonement of Jesus Christ and the effectual call of the Holy Spirit, such that he is no longer a slave of sin, but rather a blessed slave/servant of God. He is now God’s bondservant, privileged to have been rescued from his vain and empty, non-productive service, so as to have been given the glorious honor of serving the purposes of his eternal God and Creator.

And Paul is also, even more specifically, an Apostle of Jesus Christ. He has not only been called away from his natural depravity and unto a life of blessed fellowship with and service to the living God, but he has also been appointed unto the unique position of laying the foundation of the church on the Cornerstone of the Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel of grace. He has been given and granted the task of unfolding the mystery of the gospel in its universal

scope, calling both Jew and Gentile under the same Head of Jesus Christ. He is an Apostle of Jesus Christ.

But what then is the general substance of this calling? What does it entail; how is this role exercised in the sphere of tangible reality and everyday life? The specific calling of Paul, to be a bondservant of God and an Apostle of Jesus Christ is “according to the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledgment of **the truth which accords with godliness...**” That is to say that this Christian and Apostolic calling is in keeping with the body of faith, summed up in, and centered upon the gospel, which has been committed to God’s elect; to those whom God has chosen before the world was even created, to become partakers of His glorious plan of redemption, being rescued from the corruption of that world by the very means of embracing that body of faith, and the acknowledgement of the truth contained within it, which accords with; which inevitably produces godly living. Paul has been called into a life and ministry that is grounded in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which alone produces, and which must produce true godliness in all who embrace that gospel. His calling is a “truth based calling” which has the power, by means of that very truth, to produce true godliness.

Now, the significance of this statement is that it addresses the very problem that Paul is going to exhort Titus to deal with at Crete. There are false teachers, who are infiltrating the church with powerless, Judaistic traditions, which not only corrupt, defile and contradict the true gospel, but furthermore, because they do this, contrary to what they pretend to do, they actually corrupt the godly virtues and behaviors that spring out of that gospel alone. In other words, you cannot live in a way that pleases God, without drawing power to live in that way, from the gospel (from the embodiment of the faith) itself. In Chapter 3, we will find that the reason that this must be the case, is because it’s only by the power of the Holy Spirit that true holiness can come, and the Holy Spirit accomplishes true holiness; He empowers the elect unto true holiness through the gospel and the truths that spring out of it. And so, Paul’s calling is a truth-based calling that produces godliness, by means of that very truth, which he has been called to proclaim.

Notice, Paul continues on, stating, “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...”

Here, Paul exposes the great and glorious hope of the elect; the motivating urge that compels us to embrace God's life-changing truth with both arms. It is the hope of eternal life. The elect have been redeemed unto an eternal hope, looking forward to an eternal, heavenly kingdom, where righteousness dwells forever. The Gospel opens up the portal to that reality, and it drives them, therefore, to live in its light, and to pursue now, the holy life that will fill the kingdom of heaven then.

And this hope is secure, because it is grounded not in the will or strength of man, but in the promise of God. God's Word; His promise, solidifies the guarantee of all that will come to pass for His elect, in Christ. And His promise is as sure as His existence, because God cannot lie. God can no more lie than He can stop being God. It is equally impossible, because there is no darkness in Him at all. And consider this, brethren. Note well, what Paul's Words affirm here. According to the Apostle, when did God make this promise? Before time began! Here we have one of the glorious affirmations of what we call the "Covenant of Redemption," that covenant made within the Godhead before the world was even created; indeed before there was a universe and even time, itself, for that matter! You see, the certainty of all that the Christian hopes for, is ultimately bound to a promise that God has made before a single particle of this creation was even formed by the breath of God.

What are we saying here, brethren? That before Adam and Eve and a Garden even existed, God had formulated a plan to redeem a people for Himself out of a world that would fall with our first parents. A Covenant was already made within the Godhead; a glorious Covenant of redemption, whereby God would save and redeem an elect people out of this fallen world, solely and completely on the basis of His grace, secured by the sacrifice that God the Son, would offer in time and space, following His preordained incarnation. The blueprint for the whole entire package of redemption was drawn before time and fixed on the foundation of a promise from our God, who cannot lie. And that is the unshakeable ground of the hope that Paul here speaks about.

And once again, connecting this to the ministry and calling of the Apostle Paul, Paul adds that this glorious hope, fixed on a pre-Time promise, is made known in time, by the preaching of God's Word, through the likes of Paul and the Apostles, and all those who build on their

foundation. Paul's ministry; Paul's calling was to make known in time and space, what God had planned before time, not simply for Jews, but for an elect people from all tribes, tongues and nations. God's unwitnessed Covenant of redemption (made within the Godhead) is witnessed through the preaching of the gospel, and it is confirmed to the elect by the covenant of grace, God's covenant with man, which brings them into the realization of the covenant of redemption by means of their faith in Christ, the Son of God.

And so, even by way of this introductory greeting, Paul paves the way for the main purpose of this letter, solidifying the importance of pure doctrine and the godly living that springs out of it, in keeping with the very ministry and calling which was commanded Him by *God* [Note: "*our Savior* and that which follows, indicating Paul's affirmation of the deity of Christ!]

"To Titus, a true son in our common faith: Grace [Ongoing favor and blessing], mercy [Ongoing forgiveness], and peace [Ongoing inseparable relationship] from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ *our Savior*."

III. Concluding Thoughts and Applications

1) Brethren, recognize the connection between obedience and embracing the truth. Some would wonder why they are losing the battle against sin, and fail to consider if they have either gone astray from, or neglected to continue to cultivate, the truth. Christianity is a truth based faith. Everything we do, has its foundation in biblical truth. And so, if we are neglecting to cultivate that truth (to be daily in the Word, meditating upon that Word, giving heed to the preaching of the Word...etc), we ought not to be surprised if we find ourselves going astray.

But, there is more. If we are neglecting to avail ourselves to the truth, it is very likely that we are not constantly reminding ourselves of the hope of eternal glory, which has been given to us in Christ, and which compels us to a life of obedience, grounded in meditating upon God's Word. Some of us may have become short cited to the glory to come, because we have become overwhelmed with the business and affairs and idols of this temporary life. And so, we must continually (even daily) remind ourselves of eternity and all that that entails, praying about it, meditating upon it, reveling in it...so that, we will be committed to fighting the good fight until

we attain to it. There's so much to be excited about brethren, encapsulated in all that is to come in our heavenly residence with Christ, but we must continually ponder and revel in that reality or we will lose sight of it, in the battle of every day life. Our fallen nature is constantly being bombarded with temporal realities that create spiritual dementia and spiritual Alzheimer's within our souls, and our minds must be constantly exercised toward eternal realities or we will lose sight of the glory of all that we are and have in Christ. Brethren, what are your present circumstances? Are they smothering you? Step back, come up for air, and consider the big picture of all that we have in Christ [The glories of heaven, the reality of present suffering working for our good and preparing us for heaven, all that God has done in Christ to grant us every spiritual blessing in the present and to come, that God has Covenanted to do all of this before time...etc]

2) To the unbeliever, what hope do you have, which drives you through this temporal life?

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25