

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, January 10, 2024 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



TITUS STUDY

“Tough Grace in a Difficult Place”

INTRODUCTION - GOD'S PEOPLE IN A PAGAN WORLD

Titus 1:1-4

“¹Paul, 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, ²in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, ³but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior; ⁴To Titus, a true son in our common faith. Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.” – Titus 1:1-4 (NKJV)



We are beginning a new study this evening on the final of the three pastoral epistles, the book of Titus. There are three pastoral epistles in the Bible:

3 Pastoral Epistles in the Bible:

(1) **1 Timothy**

(2) **2 Timothy**

(3) **Titus**

These are called “Pastoral Epistle” because they are written to pastor for pastoral purposes. They are addressed to individuals with pastoral oversight of churches and discuss issues of Christian living, doctrine and leadership. Each one of these letter is unique in its own right, however the first two were written to the same person, Timothy, who was pastoring the church at Ephesus. The final pastoral letter was written to Titus who was pastoring or giving pastoral oversight to the churches on the island of Crete.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TITUS:

- (1) **Author:** **Apostle Paul** - Authorship by the Apostle Paul (Titus 1:1) is essentially uncontested.
- (2) **Date:** **A.D. 62-64** - Titus was written between A.D. 62–64, while Paul ministered to Macedonian churches between his first and second Roman imprisonments,
- (3) **Literary Type:** **Pastoral Letter** - Along with 1, 2 Timothy, these letters to Paul’s sons in the faith are traditionally called “The Pastoral Epistles.”
- (4) **Place of Origin:** **Nicopolis** – Paul wrote this letter most likely from Nicopolis in Macedonia (some have suggested that the letter might possibly have been written from Corinth. (cf Titus 3:12).
- (5) **Recipient:** **Titus** - This epistle is named for its recipient, Titus, who is mentioned by name 13 times in the New Testament. The title in the Greek New Testament literally reads “To Titus.” Titus, like Timothy, had become a beloved disciple and fellow worker in the gospel. Most likely, Titus served with Paul on both the second and third missionary journeys. Paul’s last mention of Titus (in 2 Timothy 4:10) reports that he had gone for ministry in Dalmatia—modern Yugoslavia. The letter probably was delivered by Zenas and Apollos. Although Luke did not mention Titus by name in the book of Acts, it seems probable that Titus, a Gentile, met and may have been led to faith in Christ by Paul before or during the apostle’s first missionary journey. **Later, Titus ministered for a period of time with Paul on the Island of Crete and was left behind to continue and strengthen the work.** After Artemas or Tychicus arrived to direct the ministry there, Paul wanted Titus to join him in the city of Nicopolis, in the province of Achaia in Greece, and stay through the winter. Because of his involvement with the church at Corinth during Paul’s third missionary journey, Titus is mentioned 9 times in 2 Corinthians, where Paul refers to him as “my brother” (in 2 Corinthians 2:13) and “my partner and fellow worker” (in 2 Corinthians 8:23) The young elder was already familiar with Judaizers, false teachers in

the church, who among other things insisted that all Christians, Gentile as well as Jew, were bound by the Mosaic law. Titus had accompanied Paul and Barnabas years earlier to the Council of Jerusalem where that heresy was the subject.

- (6) **Setting: Crete** - Crete, one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea, measuring 160 miles long by 35 miles at its widest, lying south of the Aegean Sea, had been briefly visited by Paul on his voyage to Rome (see Acts 27:7-9, 12, 13, 21).+ He returned there for ministry and later left Titus to continue the work, much as he left Timothy at Ephesus, while he went on to Macedonia. He most likely wrote to Titus in response to a letter from Titus or a report from Crete.
- (7) **Occasion: Pastoral encouragement and counsel** - Like Paul's two letters to Timothy, the apostle gives personal encouragement and counsel to a young pastor who, though well-trained and faithful, faced continuing opposition from ungodly men within the churches where he ministered. Titus was to pass on that encouragement and counsel to the leaders he was to appoint in the Cretan churches.
- (8) **Theological Themes:** In contrast to several of Paul's other letters, such as those to the churches in Rome and Galatia, the book of Titus does not focus on explaining or defending doctrine. Paul had full confidence in Titus' theological understanding and convictions, evidenced by the fact that he entrusted him with such a demanding ministry. Except for the warning about false teachers and Judaizers, the letter gives no theological correction, strongly suggesting that Paul also had confidence in the doctrinal grounding of most church members there, despite the fact that the majority of them were new believers.

Theological/Doctrinal Themes Affirmed in Titus:

1. God's sovereign election of believers (Titus 1:1-2)
2. His saving grace (Titus 2:11, 3:5)
3. Christ's deity and second coming (Titus 2:13)
4. Christ's substitutionary atonement (Titus 2:14)
5. The regeneration and renewing of believers by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5)

God and Christ are regularly referred to as Savior in Titus, and the saving plan is so emphasized in that it indicates the major thrust of the epistle is that of equipping the churches of Crete for effective evangelism. This preparation required godly leaders who not only would shepherd believers under their care, but also would equip those Christians for evangelizing their pagan neighbors, who had been characterized by one of their own famous natives as liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons. In order to gain a hearing for the gospel among such people, the believers' primary preparation for evangelization was to live among themselves with the unarguable testimony of righteous, loving, selfless, and godly lives in marked contrast to the debauched lives of the false teachers. How they behaved with reference to governmental authorities and unbelievers was also crucial to their testimony

America is often referred to as a Christian nation. There may be some debate as to whether that label was true at the start of our nation, and it is certainly true in our day if America is a Christian nation it certainly is an ailing one. Thankfully, I believe that we still have the vestiges of our Christian heritage in our Constitution and laws, but in practice, we are a thoroughly pagan nation. *What evidence do you see today that may cast some doubt on America's status as a "Christian nation?"*

Indicators That America May No Longer Be A Christian Nation:

- (1) **The rapid decline of those identifying as Christians in America** – The U.S.'s Christian numbers has been shrinking for decades. Pew Research even goes so far as to say, “In the U.S. the numerical decline of Christians continue at a rapid pace.” They cite research that they reveals that by 2070 the number of Christian in America will be below 50% of the population. They state that today those once identifying as Christians are becoming unaffiliated, so they're identifying as either atheists, agnostic or nothing in particular. But they're not all nonbelievers. Most of them do identify as nothing in particular. And most do believe in some kind of high power or spiritual force. That's where the majority of the movement is going. But few and few Americans are identifying as Christians.
- (2) **The majority of Americans say so** – The majority of Americans say that American is no longer a Christian nation. [A joint, nonpartisan survey conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute and Brookings Institute](#) found that 42 percent of Americans say the U.S. was once a Christian nation but no longer is, while 41 percent say the U.S. is and always has been a Christian nation.
- (3) **We don't look like a “Christian” nation anymore** - America today cannot possibly claim to be a truly Christian nation when: We have aborted more than 63 million babies since 1973. We are the world's leading provider of pornography by far. We have the highest rate of single-family homes in the world. We reportedly lead the world in illegal drug use and drug overdose deaths, while we are among the world leaders in categories such as crime rates, murder rates, rapes, and prisoners incarcerated. And this is only to look at the most obvious examples of us not being Christian. (For a longer list see 2013 in Salon Magazine announcing “8 appalling ways America leads the world: Welcome to the new American exceptionalism: Number one is obesity, guns, prisoners, anxiety and more...”.) Is this what a Christian nation is supposed to look like?
- (4) **Christian in America are no longer a cultural majority** – For years the ideals, values, standard of right and wrong were based on Judeo-Christian norms. Not any more. After decades of occupying the cultural majority, American Christians, especially evangelicals, have decreased in influence. If trends are any indication, our society as a whole will grow increasingly secular in the coming years. A recent Pew Research study found that each successive generation of Americans includes fewer Christians. Whereas 85% of the silent generation – the generation before baby boomers – identify as Christians, only 56% of today's younger millennials do. And those numbers continue to plummet with each successive generation.

(5) America itself is rejecting its Christian beginnings - Increasingly, America is rejecting its rich Christian heritage, its governing principles rooted in the Bible, and its Judeo-Christian belief in absolute truth and morality. Surveys indicate that only 6% of American adults possess a basic Christian worldview about things like God's attributes, the accuracy of the Bible, and salvation. Worse yet, the trend line is quickly declining. Even among professing Christians, a basic biblical worldview is becoming increasingly rare.

(6) Many professing Christians in American have stopped living and advocating Christian/Biblical standards - It is not surprising to discover that most professing Christians themselves no longer adhere to the teachings of Jesus:

- Half of all professing Christians believe casual sex is okay: Catholic (62%), mainline protestants (54%), evangelicals (36%).
- 73% of pastors believe adultery shouldn't disqualify clergy from ministry.^{[7][8]}
- The majority of professing Christians believe abortion should be legal in all or most cases: Black Protestants (64%), white Protestants (63%), Catholics (55%), Evangelicals (21%).
- 54% of Evangelicals believe religious belief is a matter of personal opinion, not objective truth.^[10]
- 60% of professing born again Christians believe Muhammad, Buddha, and Jesus all taught valid paths to God.^[11]

Only a small fraction of the 70% of Americans who identify as Christian are faithful followers of Jesus.

(7) The pronouncement of American Leaders and the Media – While president, Barack Obama stated, “Whatever we once were, we are no longer a Christian nation—at least, not just. We are also a Jewish nation, a Muslim nation, a Buddhist nation, and a Hindu nation, and a nation of nonbelievers.” This sentiment has been echoed by Christian leaders and repeatedly championed in our national media with such headlines as:

- From Newsweek, “The End of Christian America”
- From The New York Times, “A Nation of Christians Is Not a Christian Nation”^l
- From The Washington Post, “Why We Can Now Declare the End of ‘Christian America’”
- From NBC News, “White Christian America Is Over”

Throughout America, the God of the Bible has been systematically removed from our government, our education system, our public arenas, our entertainment, and now from our worldview. Those vestiges of deity which remain in our culture have been largely reimagined to comport with otherwise conflicting worldviews. In practice, we have reimagined God to be one who submits to our American culture and lifestyle, not the other way around.

Although painful for many in the church to accept, the data reveals that America remains religious but is no longer predominantly Christian. While most Americans remain happy to believe in God, many today are not willing to submit to Him because we have discovered a

more attractive alternative—one that offers all the same spiritual benefits without the responsibility, effort, or accountability. As such, America has become a post-Christian society. Some might even call it somewhat pagan. *If the emphasis of the book of Titus is “God’s People in a Pagan World,” this letter certainly fit our times and our day and is extremely relevant for where we are in our day.* It was recently revealed... and I quote, “Modern Paganism is one of America's fastest-growing religions with an estimated 1 million followers of various Pagan sects in the United States.”

Since this is the culture that we live in, we face a serious question:

How can we live as God’s holy people in such a pagan world?

Paul’s short letter to Titus addresses this problem. Sometime after his first Roman imprisonment and before his second and final imprisonment, Paul visited Crete with Titus and left him there to help resolve some problems in the struggling churches and to help them get a foothold in that pagan culture.

Crete is an island about 160 miles long and between 7 and 35 miles wide, situated off the southern tip of Greece in the Mediterranean Sea. The Cretan people had acquired a notoriously bad reputation in the Roman world. Paul cites one of their poets, Epimenides, in 1:12, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” This is the famous “Liar Paradox,” where if the Cretan making the statement is telling the truth, then he is lying. But if he’s lying about Cretans always lying, then Cretans don’t always lie. Paul seems to use it tongue-in-cheek, but it shows their reputation. In fact, the Cretans were such notorious liars that the Greek language coined a word, *kretidzo*, “to play the Cretan,” which meant, “to lie” (*A Greek-English Lexicon*, Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, rev. by Henry Stuart Jones [Oxford, 1968], p. 995).

The seed of the gospel had somehow sprouted in that inhospitable Cretan soil. Cretans had been present in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, where they heard the disciples speak in their language of the mighty deeds of God ([Acts 2:11](#)). Probably some of these Hellenistic Jews were converted when Peter preached and later went home to plant churches. But the Gentiles who got converted brought with them a lot of baggage. And, as verse 11 indicates, some of the Hellenistic Jews were promoting false doctrine as well, making for a very difficult situation.

Titus had a commendable track record of dealing with some difficult problems in Corinth. So Paul had left him in Crete to get the church there on solid footing. He wrote this letter to him and the churches to give instruction on how to be the people of God in that pagan culture. To sum up the theme both of the book and of the introduction (1:1-4),

To be God’s people in a pagan world, we who are saved by God’s grace must engage in good deeds under the authority of the local church.

The three strands of this statement recur throughout the book: salvation by grace; good deeds as the result of salvation; and, the authority of the local church. Another strong theme is that of sound doctrine, especially as it results in godly behavior. Chapter 1 deals with the need for godly church leaders, especially their role in refuting false teachers. Chapter 2 stresses the importance of various groups in the church practicing good deeds in their daily lives as a result of salvation. Chapter 3 focuses on the church's godly behavior in the world as a result of God's grace. While the flavor of the book is very practical, each chapter has a great doctrinal section: 1:1-4; 2:11-14; and, 3:4-7.

Although Titus is one of Paul's shorter letters, it contains one of his longer introductions. Verses 1-4 are a single, difficult to diagram, sentence. All of the themes that he will deal with in the book are here. Perhaps since Paul intended for the churches to read this letter (not just Titus), he may have felt it necessary to spend more effort setting forth his own credentials and the nature of God's salvation. Let's examine these three themes.

3 Important Themes in the Book of Titus for Christians in a Pagan World:

- (1) To be God's people in a pagan world, we must be saved by grace**
- (2) To be God's people in a pagan world, we who are saved by grace must engage in good deeds**
- (3) To be God's people in a pagan world, we must submit ourselves to the authority of the local church**

TO BE GOD'S PEOPLE IN A PAGAN WORLD, WE MUST BE SAVED BY GRACE.

Where sin abounds, God's grace super-abounds! One of the glories of the gospel is that it is the power of God for salvation, even in the most corrupt cultures. Paul packs a lot of solid theology in these opening verses, where salvation is a dominant theme.

As I've said before, we need to remember that salvation is a radical term...

- You don't save someone who is in pretty good shape and just needs a little help.
- You save someone who is helplessly, hopelessly lost without outside intervention.

The human race is dead in sin. Only God has the power to raise the dead (Eph. 2:1-5). Humanity is spiritually blind. Only the God who spoke light into existence has the power to open blind eyes (2 Cor. 4:4-6).

Some things to remember concerning salvation:

1. Salvation is of God, not of man –

What is meant by this statement?: (Salvation of God, not of man)

- (1) Salvation is rooted in God's choice, not in our choice -** After identifying himself, Paul immediately states that salvation is rooted in God's choosing us and in His eternal promise of eternal life. He calls God our Savior (1:3) and in the next breath he

refers to Christ Jesus our Savior (1:4), putting Christ on the same level as God the Father. He does the same thing in Titus 2:10 & 13, where he calls God our Savior, and then refers to *“our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”* He repeats this a third time in Titus 3:4 & 6, *“God our Savior,”* and, *“Jesus Christ our Savior.”*

In Paul’s mind, Jesus Christ is fully God and the triune God is the only Savior (“renewing by the Holy Spirit, 3:5). When Paul says that he is an apostle “for the faith of those chosen of God” (1:1), the word “for” is a Greek preposition (*kata*) that here has the meaning, “for the purpose of” (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Walter Bauer, William Arndt, and Wilbur Gingrich, 2nd ed. [University of Chicago Press, 1979], pp. 406-407). The idea is the same as in 2 Timothy 2:10, *“For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.”* Paul laboured as an apostle and evangelist so that God’s elect would come to salvation through faith in Christ.

Note that Paul begins by stating the fact of God’s election without apology or explanation. He assumes that both Titus and his mostly Gentile readers will understand and accept this truth that is repeated all through Scripture. *Today, the American evangelical church largely rejects this clear, important truth, that salvation is not rooted in your choice of God, but rather in His sovereign choice of you.* It is usually explained away by saying that God chose people for salvation because He foresaw that they would believe. But this would mean that God did not choose them, but rather they chose Him! It also would mean that God is not sovereign in determining His plan for the ages, but rather He depended on man to decide, and then He made up His plan accordingly. It really makes man sovereign and God just agrees to whatever we decide to do! But the Bible is clear that God does not choose people for salvation because He foresees that they will believe. That would nullify His grace, because it would make salvation depend on something good in man. Rather, dead sinners come to life and believe because in His eternal purpose, God chose them for salvation.

(2) Salvation depends upon coming to the knowledge of the truth, which only God can impart - For those who are chosen by God to come to faith, they must also come *“to the knowledge of the truth”* (Titus 1:1). In other words, saving faith must rest on the content of the truth as revealed in the Bible.

- A person must understand what Scripture teaches about God as absolutely holy and about himself as a sinner.
- He must understand that Jesus Christ, who is God in human flesh, took the penalty that we deserved when He died on the cross.
- He must understand that God grants salvation as His free gift apart from any works or goodness in us, and that we must trust in Christ alone to save us.

Paul states that the natural man cannot understand these truths unless the Spirit of God opens his eyes (1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:4-6; see also, Acts 16:14). This means that no one can reason his way to salvation apart from God's revelation in the Bible. And, no one can understand God's revelation in the Bible unless God opens his eyes to the truth of it.

(3) Salvation is the hope of eternal life, which only God can promise and impart - Further, Paul states that this faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth rest upon "the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago" (Titus 1:2). The Greek word translated "in" means "upon." The truths stated in verse 1 rest upon the hope of eternal life. "Hope" could be understood in either of two ways.

- (1) It may refer to our hope in God's promise of eternal life.
- (2) Or, it may mean, "the hope which is eternal life."

In other words, God's promise of eternal life is in itself a hope-filled promise. Eternal life is our hope. Biblical hope is not uncertain, such as we say, "I hope that I get the job I applied for." Rather, biblical hope is absolutely certain, but not yet realized. The certainty rests on the character of the God who promises, the God "who cannot lie."

God is constitutionally incapable of lying. He always speaks the truth. That would have been a startling concept to a people that were notorious liars! Jesus, who is the truth and always speaks the truth ([John 14:6; 8:45](#)) called Satan the father of lies ([John 8:44](#)).

- Satan foisted on Eve the lie that God's word was not true.
- He told her that if she would eat of the forbidden fruit, she would be like God, able to discern between good and evil.
- When she and Adam fell for that lie, the human race was plunged into sin and alienation from God.
- Ever since, people have fallen for the lie that they can find happiness and eternal life apart from the living and true God.

God gave this promise of eternal life through the gospel "long ages ago." Calvin understands that phrase to refer to God's promise of salvation to the human race right after the fall, because before that there weren't any people to give a promise to. But Paul is probably going back to the eternal purpose of God, to show that He planned our salvation even before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4, 11). The promise was there before there were any people that needed it! That makes our hope of eternal life all the more secure. It is rooted in God's eternal promise! This salvation that only God could purpose or promise is nothing less than *eternal life*, which only He can impart. God alone is the author of life. Life is inherent in God. When He created the world, He breathed life into every living creature. Last of all, He created man as a living

being, created in His image. When man fell, he died spiritually. Spiritual death means separation from the life of God. Spiritually dead people cannot will themselves into spiritual life, no matter how hard they try. The fact is, they don't try because they are incapable of trying. Thus salvation is nothing less than God's raising us from death to life. William Barclay writes (*The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* [Westminster Press, rev. ed.], p. 228), "The Christian gospel does not in the first place offer men an intellectual creed or a moral code; it offers them life, the very life of God."

Thus Paul strongly establishes that salvation is of God, not of man. But how does God's salvation come to lost sinners?

...okay, the second thing you need to remember about salvation...

2. Salvation comes to sinners through the proclamation of God's Word – The doctrines of salvation (including such things as eternal security, election, and the sovereignty of God) does not nullify the need for evangelism, but rather it establishes that need. As we've already seen, God appointed Paul as an apostle *"for the faith of those chosen of God."* He laboured so that others would come to salvation. God entrusted Paul with *"the proclamation"* of His word, that is, the word of the gospel, which centers in the person of Jesus Christ, manifested at the proper time (Titus 1:3)

"Proclamation" is the word that was used for the message of the king's herald...

- He didn't make up his own message.
- Rather, he faithfully proclaimed the king's message.
- That is our job when we give out the gospel.
- Paul viewed his calling as a preacher of the gospel to be a commandment from God our Savior (1:3).
- As Paul begins, he was God's bond-servant (the word means, "slave"). As such, he was under orders to preach the gospel (1 Cor. 9:16-17)
- .

...the third thing you need to remember about salvation...

3. Salvation is by grace through faith and results in God's peace - Paul greets Titus, whom he calls *"my true child in a common faith"* (Titus 1:4). *"True child"* (see 1 Tim. 1:2) means "legitimate" child. Probably Paul had led Titus to faith. *"Common faith"* may refer to the Christian faith as a whole, or to both men's personal faith in Christ. *"Grace and peace"* was Paul's common greeting, but it is always more than a greeting.

- **Grace** sums up the gospel, as opposed to all world religions.
- Every religion apart from the gospel is based on human merit and works.

- The gospel alone rests on God’s unmerited favor to sinners who deserve His wrath. The gospel alone results in peace with God.
- As Paul wrote (Rom. 5:1), *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

So, if we want to be God’s people in this pagan world, we must make sure that we have been saved by His grace and that we proclaim the gospel of His grace. But, does grace mean that once we’re saved, we are free to sin? No,

TO BE GOD’S PEOPLE IN A PAGAN WORLD, WE WHO ARE SAVED BY GRACE MUST ENGAGE IN GOOD DEEDS

This is a second major theme throughout the book, but we see it twice in these introductory verses...

2 Times/Ways Paul Reminds Titus We Are to Engage in Good Deeds:

- (1) **All that know Christ are God’s bond-servants** - Paul does not begin this letter to Titus by claiming for himself, *“The Right Reverend Doctor Paul, Honourable Apostle, Author, and Christian conference speaker”*! Rather, he says (literally), *“Paul, a slave of God.”* He often refers to himself as a bond-servant of Christ, but this is the only time he calls himself a bond-servant of God. It was a title applied to Moses and several other prophets, so perhaps he is identifying himself with these Old Testament saints to establish credibility with the Jewish critics that were plaguing the church. But if you’re a child of God through the new birth, you are not your own. You’ve been bought with a price...

“¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body ^[a] and in your spirit, which are God’s.” – 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

As God’s bond-slave, you are under orders to obey and serve Him.

- (2) **The Truth that we now know leads to godliness** - Paul says (1:1) that the knowledge of the truth is *“according to godliness.”* It is the same Greek preposition (*kata*) that can mean “purpose” or “intent.” All that have been saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9) are God’s “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). In Titus, Paul emphasizes good deeds in Titus 1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 5, 8, & 14. It is the dominant theme of chapter 2, that God’s people in whatever walk of life must live in such a way that their lives “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect” (Titus 2:10). It is a terrible tragedy when someone who professes to be a Christian disgraces the gospel through immorality or

dishonesty in business or other ungodly character... by the way they live, behave, talks, treat others. God's people should display godly behavior for the world to see.

Great! But, how do we do it? This leads to the third theme:

TO BE GOD'S PEOPLE IN A PAGAN WORLD, WE MUST SUBMIT OURSELVES TO THE AUTHORITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Authority is not a popular concept in our day. We are a nation founded on a rebellion, and we value an independent, contrary spirit as a virtue. Authority scares us... we think either of mind-controlling cults or tyrannical dictators or governments. But God instituted proper authority as the necessary structure for civil governments, for the home, and for His church. We will see this more as we work through this epistle (*e.g.*, Titus 2:5, 15). But, note briefly the chain of command in our text.

The Chain of Command/Authority in Titus 1:

- (1) **God the Father** - First, there is God the Father, who gives His commandments (1:3). He is the supreme sovereign of the universe.
- (2) **Jesus Christ** - Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, willingly submitted to the Father's will in order to carry out the divine plan of redemption.
- (3) **The Apostles** - Of which Paul was one, were under the authority of Jesus Christ, with delegated authority over the churches (2 Cor. 13:10).
- (4) **The Church** – The church was founded on the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20). After the foundation was laid, those two offices ceased to exist. Any modern sense of “apostle” only refers to those sent out to plant churches, and their authority is the authority of the New Testament.
- (5) **Godly Elders and Overseers** - As we will see, the authority in a local church is vested in a plurality of godly men called “elders” or “overseers” (Titus 1:5, 7). They are not free to lord it over the church, but rather they serve under the authority of God and His Word, to which the entire church is subject. Just as we need proper parental authority in the home to bring children to maturity, so in the family of God, we need the authority of godly elders to help people grow in godliness.

CONCLUSION

How may we apply these opening verses?

How to apply these opening verses of Titus?”

- (1) **Have you been saved by God's grace?** - First, have you been saved by God's grace? I sometimes have people ask me, “How can I know whether I am one of His elect?” The biblical answer is, are you trusting in Christ alone for salvation? If so, that didn't come from you. It came from God, who opened your blind eyes, raised you from spiritual death, and granted you faith and repentance. If you are saved, there will be evidence of new life

in your heart. You will love God and want to know Him better. You will hate sin and want to conquer it. You will love God's Word and His people.

- (2) **Are you seeking to live a life of good deeds because of Jesus Christ?** - Second, are you seeking to live a life of good deeds because of what God has done for your soul? Do you live to please Him, beginning at home? Do you seek to be a witness for Christ by your life and words?
- (3) **Are you committed to and in submission to a local church where God's Word is honored and faithfully proclaimed?** Finally, are you committed to and in submission to a local church where God's Word is honored and His gospel is preached? If so, you are on the path of being one of God's people in this pagan world.