

The Facets Of A Faithful Servant

Titus 1:1-4

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I want to read Titus 1:1-4, and I want you to follow with me in your Bible. It starts with, “Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; 2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; 3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour; 4 To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.”

Why would we want to study this little book of Titus that was written almost 19 centuries ago to a little known missionary in an obscure island in the Aegean Sea and a senior missionary in a situation that was difficult? What possible relevance could it have for us in the 21st century? I’m going to quote Martin Luther the great Protestant reformer. He said, “This is a short epistle, but it contains such an example of Christian doctrine, and is composed in such a masterly manner, that it contains all that is needful for Christian knowledge and life.” There are two dominant themes that you’re going to see in the book of Titus, and they’re so important. The first theme is belief, and the second theme is behavior.

Today in the church we find in a lot of cases that people want to separate belief from behavior. Sometimes they say, “You know, it just matters what you believe and it doesn’t really matter how you behave.” Some people say, “It matters just how you behave, it doesn’t matter how you believe,” but the Bible puts them together. They’re kind of like two Siamese twins of the Bible. What you believe determines how you behave, and it’s not okay just to say, “It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you behave,” and it really isn’t right to say, “It doesn’t matter how you behave as long as you believe properly.” The Bible gives us both—that we should believe sound doctrine and we should behave in a spiritual way that is honoring to God. In this theme, we find the sound in belief and behavior.

Let me give you the key text, as so many scholars would point out, of the entire epistle. There might be differences of opinion, but most Bible students believe that this is indeed the theme. It’s Titus 3:8. “This is a faithful saying,” that’s that familiar pastoral kind of statement, “faithful saying,” “and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God,” there’s that first theme, “might be careful to maintain good works,” there’s that second theme. “These things are good and profitable unto men.” This is the epistle of belief and behavior. I recently encountered someone that actually said that it really doesn’t matter how you behave as long as you believe properly. I thought, You need to study the book of Titus because Titus is all about belief and behavior.

What is the place of this epistle in the New Testament? When you study a book of the Bible, I think it’s good to get back and to see the big picture. In the New Testament we have basically the first four books of the Bible, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which are the gospels, then the

Acts of the apostles is history; so Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts are the historical books of the New Testament. The second category is known as the Pauline epistles, the epistles of Paul, followed by the general epistles, and the last category known as prophecy, which is the book of Revelation. You have history (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts), the Pauline epistles which are doctrine (again, we shouldn't neglect those and that's what we're studying here) also known as the pastoral epistles, you have the general epistles, and then you have the prophetic book of Revelation. As far as the book of Titus goes, it is categorized as a pastoral epistle, and there are three of them in the New Testament—1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. They're called that because they are written not to the church so much as they are to a pastor. When you study these pastoral epistles, you come to understand that Paul is not only addressing the pastor directly, but he also has instruction for the congregation. It does start primarily with instruction for a pastor, but we learn a lot of information about how the church should function and operate as well as what the pastor's job and responsibility is.

In chronological order of the pastorals, I think it's interesting, is 1 Timothy, then Titus, and then 2 Timothy. Second Timothy, which we just finished studying, was the last epistle Paul ever penned. It's the last of the Pauline epistles, but the chronological order was that Paul wrote 1 Timothy, then Titus, and then he penned the letter of 2 Timothy as he gave his swan song.

Who was this Titus that Paul is writing to? Well, it's interesting that he was no doubt a traveling companion and cohort of Paul, but he's not mentioned in the book of Acts. You only find out about Titus from the epistles of Paul, but he was a Gentile, which is interesting. Timothy was part Jewish and part Gentile, but Titus was a pure Gentile which is kind of interesting because he was planted on the island of Crete to pastor the church there and to set things in order which he was actually perfectly suited for because he was indeed a Gentile. He was kind of what I like to call Paul's troubleshooter. When Paul had a problem or an issue, he would send Titus to deal with the issue. He was also one of the individuals that Paul sent to Macedonia to collect an offering and to carry it to the saints who were in Jerusalem.

Titus was in the island of Crete. I want you to look at Titus 1:5 (we'll get there next Wednesday), he says to Titus, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." We don't know for sure how the church got started on the island of Crete, but on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, there were people from Crete that were there that were converted and it's possible they took the gospel back to this little island. I've stopped on the island of Crete. It's a cool, beautiful little island. It's actually only about 160 miles long, and its widest spot is about 35 miles. It narrows in one spot to about 6-7 miles, but it is a Mediterranean island. The climate is just gorgeous, the sea around it is just beautiful. It's in the southeast area of the Greek islands. Paul sent Titus there to do two things, I want you to notice it in verse 5, "...to set in order the things that are wanting," this will happen in chapters 2 and 3, and then says, "and ordain elders in every city." The elders would be pastors, and like 1 Timothy, we're going to get the qualifications for pastors. We won't get the qualifications for deacons, they're not mentioned in Titus, and the qualifications that we get in Titus are abbreviated. They're brief compared to what we had in Timothy, but you'll find them quite fascinating and apropos to our lives as he

talks about the pastor's spiritual life, his family life, and his ministerial life as well.

When did Titus go to Crete? It's believed he went from somewhere between 62 to 64 A.D., and during that time Paul wrote to Titus to straighten things out there on the island of Crete.

Let me give you a quick outline and more complete reason for why Paul wrote this epistle. He wrote it to tell Titus to ordain elders (Titus 1:5-9), to rebuke false teachers (Titus 1:10-16), and thirdly to teach sound doctrine. In Titus 2:1 he says, "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine." That word "sound" there is a recurring word in the pastorals, especially in Titus. It's a medical term from which we get our word hygiene. It means that which is healthy or life-giving, so speak the things that are sound, healthy doctrine. The fourth reason is in Titus 3, to teach them to maintain good works, so it was to get them to be sound in belief and sound in their practice.

This is interesting in light of...and real quick before I begin to unpack these verses, it's interesting that sometimes people think that James' emphasis on works is contrary to Paul's emphasis on faith. Now, remember when I opened up tonight, and I've already touched on it several times, that you have belief and behavior, belief and behavior, belief and behavior. That's reflected again in the writings of Paul that we have faith, belief, and behavior in the writings of James. They are not contradictory, they're complimentary. We're saved by grace, but anyone who's been saved by grace should have a transformed life and should live a life of godliness, true holiness, and have good works. Doctrine leads to duty. It's so important that we understand that.

Let's start by looking at Paul's opening salutation. In the Greek verses 1-4 is one long sentence. It has 65 words. There are only two longer introductions or salutations, Galatians (75 words) and Romans (93 words). It's full of doctrinal truth, and the focus is on Paul and his ministry. I want you to note (if you're taking notes) three facets of Paul's ministry and life. The first is Paul's position, notice it in verse 1. "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ." There are two things that Paul says about himself. First, he says that he was a servant. Paul is the human author, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but he uses a very strong word there for servant. It's the Greek word *doulos*. That word actually should more accurately be translated, slave. The Greeks hated the concept of slavery, and to a Greek they would never want to be a slave. In the Greco-Roman world, if a Roman soldier was going to be taken captive by an enemy, the honorable thing for them to do was to commit suicide rather than to become a slave or taken captive. They just disdained that idea. Paul throws that out the window and says, "Look, I'm proud of and glad to be considered a slave of Jesus Christ and a slave of God," the idea that we are His *doulos*. The bondsman or *doulos* means that we have chosen willfully, deliberately, intentionally, to serve God and that we become His property.

One of the benefits of being a slave is that you were owned by your master but your master had the responsibility to take care of and to provide for you. They had to feed you, clothe you, house you, and take care of you. There are benefits of being a slave or a servant of God that God must take care of us. Sometimes I think about that when I'm facing a difficulty or a

hardship or a trial thinking, I'm God's property. You've heard me mention that years ago I experienced being actually kidnapped in Los Angeles. I won't go into any detail, but we (myself and two other friends) were kidnapped at gunpoint, held hostage for several hours in a car with guns held to our heads, and they were threatening to kill us. I kid you not, the thought that was running through my head was, I belong to God. I'm God's property. You kidnapped the wrong person here. I'm a child of God. I actually turned to the fellow with his gun behind me in the back seat and said, "You know, it's no accident you kidnapped us tonight because we're Christians and we're servants of the Lord. He had you kidnap us so that we could tell you that Jesus loves you and can forgive you and can change your life and you can be forgiven of your sins." This guy's got a gun at the back of my head and said, "My mother's a Christian, and she's been telling me that all my life." I said, "See, I told you," but I had that actual thought of, I'm God's property. I belong to God. No one can touch me but what God allows. No one can harm me but what God is in control, so I don't need to be afraid. Who do I need to fear when I belong to God? I love that!

It is a concept of great humility, and from the time of Paul's conversion in Acts 9, he viewed himself as a slave. Another thing about being His *doulos* is you have no will of your own. Your whole life is doing the will of your master, is getting your eyes fixed on Him and saying, "God, where do You want me to go? What do You want me to do? What's the task for the day? How do You want me to spend my time?" You belong to God, and you need to use your time, your talent, and your treasure to serve Him. The Bible says, "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." My question tonight is: Do you see yourself as a *doulos* or a bondsman of God and of Jesus Christ?

The second title (and I won't tarry on it) is that Paul is an apostle of Jesus Christ, so he's writing with his apostolic authority. It's a title of great authority. There were the 12 apostles and there was Paul, and one of the qualifications to be an apostle was that you had to have seen the resurrected Christ and you had to be commissioned by Christ. In that primary sense, I do not believe that there are apostles today that have apostolic authority to speak authoritatively and to change Scripture, make rules, or tell people how to live their lives. Beware of anybody that comes and says, "I'm an apostle, and you have to do what I tell you to do." The authority lies in the apostle's Scripture, the writings of the apostles. Remember the Bible says in Acts 2, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine," in their teaching, so that's where the authority lies. The foundation of the church was given by the apostles.

There's a secondary sense in which we like being servants or slaves of God, that we can also be His ambassadors. The closest thing we would have to an apostle today would be an ambassador, a representative; and truly as Christians, we all represent Christ and we're to be His ambassadors. Someone said, "The first title, that is, that of a *doulos*, pictures him as a slave of the Supreme Master. The second is a messenger of the Sovereign Lord." I like that. So, we are slaves of God and messengers of Jesus Christ, so we need to understand, "I'm His property. I'm His slave. I belong to Him. I have to seek to do His will, and I want to be His representative." There we see Paul's position.

The second thing we see is Paul's purpose, and that runs from the end of verse 1 down through verse 3. Let's read it again. He says, "...according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; 2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie," what an awesome statement, "promised before the world began; 3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour."

For what purpose had Paul become God's slave and Christ's apostle? Five purposes. I want you to see them in the text. First of all for the purpose of evangelizing. Notice it in verse 1, "according to the faith of God's elect," or to bring those whom God has chosen to faith. God elects but we must evangelize. Someone said, "The God who ordains the end, salvation, ordains the means to that end, evangelization and faith." What Paul is referring to when he says, "according to the faith of God's elect," the Bible does teach that God elects those who will be saved. I think we would be foolish to try to argue against this biblical doctrine. God chooses you. Now, if you're a Christian, Jesus said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." Now, from the human side we say, "Well, I repented of my sins and I believed in Jesus Christ. Someone preached and I heard," or "Someone witnessed to me," or "I was at a crusade or church," or "A friend told me about Jesus, and I knelt down and accepted Christ in my heart," but the divine side is that before you were ever created or born, God set His love upon you and chose you.

I wouldn't have chosen you. I wouldn't have chosen me but God chose me, and the basis of His choice was His sovereign grace and His love. I know a lot of people will fight that, "Oh, well, no that's not right." Well, that's taught in the Bible, but that doesn't mean that we just kick back and don't tell people about Jesus, we don't preach the gospel, and we don't share and try to evangelize. God, who ordained the end, the salvation of souls, ordained the means to that end that we preach the gospel. How do people get saved? By preaching the gospel, "...faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." That statement "the word of God" literally is a sermon preached about Christ. It's the preaching of the gospel, and I'm convinced that there is no substitute, that the church cannot and the church must not ever, ever give up the preaching of the gospel.

If the church gives up the preaching of the gospel, then we're no longer the church and we're not doing what we've been commissioned to. Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." We do everything but preach the gospel. We have committee meetings, hayrides, taffy pulls, potlucks. We get together in sporting events and all kinds of social events. You know, you can join a country club for that stuff. When you come to church, you should do what the Bible tells us we should do—worship, pray, study God's Word, edify and build up each other with Scriptures. That's what we're here to do. Paul was instrumental in bringing people to Christ, so we're actually understanding here not only what a pastor's job and responsibility is but all of us have a responsibility to share the evangelical gospel message. The word "good news" is the preaching of that gospel message and people coming to Christ.

The second aspect of Paul there is that he does education (verse 1), "...the acknowledging of

the truth,” so faith and reason belong together. He leads them to Christ evangelistically and then teaches them practically the truths of God’s Word. A Christian needs to be educated in the truth of God’s Word. Again, Romans 10:17, “...faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” After a person has been evangelized, then they need to acknowledge the truth. They need to grow in the truth. They need to understand the truth and taught the truth. The church should be a place where believers are taught the Bible. Amen? You’re taught the Word of God, you learn the Word of God. If you come to this church and you’re not being fed or taught the Word or growing in the Word, something is wrong. You should be growing in your knowledge and understanding of God’s Word; and you, individually, should feed on God’s Word, to feed your faith on the Word of God by reading the Bible everyday, by studying the Bible, and by being a doer of the Bible, God’s Word.

Notice thirdly, (verse 1) there is the third stage of sanctification. There’s evangelization, edification, and then sanctification. Notice the phrase, “which is after godliness.” The NIV translates that, “...the truth that leads to godliness,” so there’s the evangelizing, bringing them to faith in Christ; then there’s the edification, the teaching, edifying, building them up in the Word; and then there is the holiness of life, the sanctification, which produces or leads to a life of godliness. Again, John R.W. Stott said, “It is an essential feature of truth that a good test of its authenticity that since it comes from God it leads to God. Any doctrine which does not promote godliness is manifestly bogus. Any doctrine that does not produce and lead to and manifest godliness in the person believing it is a bogus doctrine.” If you’re getting taught something that leads you to a sinful lifestyle, that’s not sound doctrine, that’s not the Word of God. Godliness is the ultimate goal of God’s people, but man by himself is ungodly. You can be religious and not be godly, so we need to have the work of the Spirit through the Word of God to sanctify us to make us more like Christ. Write down 2 Peter 1:3 where Peter says, “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.”

Notice the fourth thing about Paul’s ministry in verse 2 is expectation. I love it, he says, “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.” What does Paul mean by “hope of eternal life?” I don’t know about you, but when you read that you could be tempted to think, What’s the deal here? or we used to say, “What’s the skinny? What’s up? Hope of eternal life? I thought we as Christians were saved? Doesn’t John 3:16 say, ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life?’ Why does Paul say ‘hope of eternal life?’” We Christians have our fingers crossed, we have a rabbit’s foot in our back pocket, a lucky charm, and we’re hoping that we have eternal life? The truth is salvation has three tenses, here we go again—I’ve been saved, I’m being saved, and I will be saved. There’s that “hope of eternal life.”

Now, I would assume that most of you here tonight haven’t died, you haven’t gone to heaven, you haven’t been glorified yet. You’re here tonight and you haven’t gone to heaven yet, so you’re being saved. If you’re a Christian, you’re being saved. You’ve been saved from the penalty of sin, past; you’re being saved from the power of sin, sanctification; you will be saved in the future from the very presence of sin, which is glorification. As a matter of fact, you ought to put that to memory, by the way—I’ve been saved from the penalty of sin, I’m being saved from

the power of sin, and one day I will be saved from the presence of sin altogether. In those three categories you have justification, sanctification, and glorification. Christians that don't understand the three tenses of salvation can get the Bible and the Christian life really confused. Paul's talking about the future hope of going to heaven.

When the Bible uses hope for the believer, and I can't wait to get to that passage in Titus where it says we're, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," it's talking about a settled confident assurance. How do we know? Notice it in verse 2, "God...promised before the world began." Aren't the promises of God amazing? "...exceeding great and precious promises," and guess what? The God who promised (verse 2) cannot lie. The God who made this promise does not lie and cannot lie because God will never ever violate His own nature.

Did you know that there are things that God cannot do? We always hear about, "God can do anything. All things are possible with God. God can do anything." Well, not completely. God cannot lie. He can't do it. I heard Billy Graham years ago preach an awesome sermon, The Things God Can't Do. I loved it! Another thing God can't do is He can't save you apart from faith in Jesus Christ. If you don't repent and believe in Jesus Christ, and if you're not born again, God cannot save you. He won't violate His own nature, which is holy and righteous. That's something God cannot do, so God cannot lie. I can lie. You can lie. Anyone can lie. Politicians can certainly lie, right? We're certainly reminded of this today. That's why we need to pray for our nation, but God cannot lie. Another thing God cannot do, and that is, God cannot change. He's immutable. He changes not. What a marvelous truth that is! Nothing is so true as the Word of God, and it provides for us endurance and patience.

Lastly, on this point of Paul's purpose, his purpose was proclamation. In verse 3 he says, "But," that is, God who cannot lie, "hath in due times manifested," in other words, manifest means to make clear, to reveal, to unveil. God has manifested or made clear, "his word," and how has He done that? Here we go again, "through preaching," that is, that heralding, that proclamation of God's Word. There's no substitute for preaching, "which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour." Some churches have left preaching and just do interviews on Sunday. They have famous people come up on the stage, and they interview them. Interviews are great, but they shouldn't substitute the preaching or teaching of the Word. You don't come to church to hear someone interviewed, you come to hear a Word from the Lord and, "Thus saith the Lord." The Bible should be opened, read, explained, proclaimed, and applied to our lives. That's what Paul is talking about is preaching ministry.

I was reading the commentary by Charles Swindoll, who I love and highly respect. He's been preaching the Word for so many years, and he flat out says in verse 3 there that Paul is explaining that his ministry is to be expositional. It's an expository ministry—which is my passion—that the preaching must be expositional or explanation of opening up. When Paul uses that phrase in verse 3, "manifested his word," it means that he's unveiled it or that he has made it clear, so it's the explanation or the expositional preaching of God's Word. The preaching of the gospel is the bridge which spans the two eternities of past promise and future

fulfillment.

Before I move to verse 4 and we wrap this up, I want you to note the place the Word of God has in Paul's ministry and should be in all ministers' lives. First, it was used for evangelism. The Word of God should be used in evangelism. Secondly, it was used in education. He was teaching and preaching the Word and instructing people in God's Word. Thirdly, it was used in the sanctification of the saints. We are sanctified through His truth, His Word is truth. Fourthly, it was used in the expectation. God's Word promises that Jesus is coming again and He'll take us home to heaven. Fifthly, we have in our text (verse 3) the proclamation of His Word, "... through preaching, which is committed," or entrusted, "unto me." Paul was a steward of God's Word, "according to the commandment of God our Saviour."

In 2 Timothy 4, Paul told Timothy to, "Preach the word." The "word" is kerysso, not preach philosophy, not preach psychology, not preach human wisdom, but preach the Word, and that's so very important. That's for the church, it's important the Word is in our homes, and that the Word of God goes out into the world.

Lastly (verse 4), we see Paul's personal son. He comes to the end of his salutation and finally tells us who he's writing to. You gotta get down to verse 4. That's why I said it's a very lengthy salutation packed with a lot of important doctrine. He says, "To Titus, mine own son after the common faith," which indicates that Titus was perhaps led to Christ by Paul's ministry. Timothy came to Christ through Paul's ministry and Titus came to Christ through Paul's ministry. The words "mine own son" indicates my own dear son, my own biological son, and it's in a spiritual sense that he's his very own son or it could be that he's just referring to the fact that, "I mentored you, I've disciplined you, and I've taught you," which is an important point, that Paul invested himself in the life of others. Take note of that. Paul invested his life in others. You can't live alone. We need to find somebody to mentor, to encourage, to instruct, to pull along, to put our arm around, to help and strengthen them. Don't just think about yourself, think about someone else. Do you want to get strong and grow and have a vibrant Christian life? Then get your eyes on the Lord and reach out your hand to someone who is in need. Reach out to someone who needs to be encouraged or taught or helped and strengthened in their walk with the Lord.

How does Paul close? He closes with, "Grace, mercy, and peace," and what is the source of grace, mercy, and peace? "...from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour." Again, we have the first person of the Godhead, God the Father, and God the Son. What do They bring to us? They bring grace, mercy, and peace. We're saved by grace. We're sustained by God's grace. We serve by God's grace. We are strengthened in our lives by the grace of God, God's unmerited favor, God's mercy, God's compassion. God not giving us what we deserve speaks of God's compassion, and it speaks of then the peace which is the byproduct or the fruit or the result of being saved by the grace of God. Grace always comes before the peace of God. It means we have freedom from anxiety and we have peace in spite of adverse difficult circumstances. Sometimes, even as Christians, we're freaking out when we need to rest in God's grace, mercy, and peace. Remember that those things come as their source from

God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ, so get on your knees, get in God's Word, pray, seek God and hear His voice, and experience His peace.

Paul saw himself as a slave, do you? Paul was an ambassador of Jesus Christ, are you? Paul sought to evangelize others, do you? Paul used God's Word to win others to Christ and to disciple them. Do you do that? Paul shared the hope that Christ is coming again. Do you live in that expectation and that hope? We can only experience the grace of God, the peace of God, and the mercy of God because of the cross of Christ. Amen? Because Jesus died on that cross, then I can have peace with God through Jesus Christ. As we pass out the elements tonight, I encourage you to hold your portion until we're served. We're going to pray and ask God to really speak to our hearts tonight and that we would consecrate and dedicate our lives. That I would say, "Lord, I want to be Your servant. I want to be Your ambassador. I want to be Your messenger. Use me for Your glory." Let's pray.