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GOD'S PLAN TO BUILD YOUR FAITH (Titus 1:1 - 4)

Welcome back to a new session for 2017 and with it, a new series of Bible studies. Let me invite you to our time of prayer and Bible discussion every Thursday of the session at 8:00 a.m. in Room 153. Regardless of your background, worldview, or party you are welcome. We also love it when staffers can visit as well. Please feel free to join us!

This year we will consider truths from the little book of Titus, which is packed with important teaching, helping us to understand topics like the church, the nature of salvation, and the role good works should play in our lives. I'm excited to explore this section of Scripture with you!

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to his protégé, Titus, as one of his Pastoral Epistles. It gives great insight into what an older, more experienced minister considered crucial instructions to a younger colleague. As we'll see, Titus was given a tough assignment and Paul boiled down his thoughts to their irreducible minimum in this short letter.

Paul jumps right in at the start with a key concept, focusing on how to build a strong faith.

GOD'S MISSION MUST BE A PRIORITY (vv. 1, 2)

*Titus 1:1, 2 – Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, **for the sake of the faith** of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, **in hope of eternal life**, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began*

Paul immediately establishes his credential as a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ. The word “*doulos*” (servant) referred to the lowest level of person in the culture of that day, so Paul is not starting by inflating his position, but pointing to God as the one who is deserving of honor.

The reason he passionately serves is for faith – the faith that must be shared with an unbelieving world as well

as strengthening the faith of the elect – those chosen by God to be in his family.

How will that faith be strengthened? By knowledge of God's truth as he has revealed it. Only then can a person obey and please God with their life.

Divine truth and godliness are intimately related. No matter how sincere our intentions might be, we cannot obey God's will if we do not know what it is. We cannot be godly if we do not know what God is like and what He expects of those who belong to Him. - John MacArthur -

You've heard it said of someone (or maybe you've said it yourself), “That's a person of faith.” What makes us say that? We don't see what they do in private and we cannot with certainty know what is truly in their heart. But we can watch them. We can see their behavior, hear their words, observe their care of others, gain some understanding of their view of God. When we glimpse godliness, or a life marked by the ways of God shaped by his Word, we can make the deduction that the person truly has knowledge of the Lord which comes from a strong faith and testifies to the change God has made in them.

But Paul doesn't stop with a godly life in this world. He also includes God's ultimate mission of granting eternal life to those who believe in him. Hope of what is coming is a towering theme in the book of Titus as we will see in future weeks.

Christian hope, biblical hope, is “a confident expectation and desire for something good in the future.” ... What we hope for must be certain, not doubtful, so that our expectation of its coming to pass may be confident, not wavering. - Steve Roy -

This promise of eternal life is a guarantee for the believer. Why? God doesn't lie. It's not in his nature. By virtue of being God, he is truth and cannot lie. What a confidence you can have when you take God at his word and believe him!

*Numbers 23:19 - **God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?***

GOD'S MESSAGE MUST BE PROMINENT (v. 3)

*Titus 1:3 . . . and at the proper time **manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior;***

Just as God's mission is to establish faith in people and give them the hope of eternal life, his message and the way it is transmitted is also crucial.

God's word shows us the way and was given right when God wanted it given, but it is also to be the central focus of preaching. The gospel is primarily a declared message and God has given preachers to his church to spiritually feed those whose faith is being built up. Without it, faith fades.

Where the authentic preaching of the Word takes place, the church is there. And where that is absent, there is no church. No matter how high the steeple, no matter how large the budget, no matter how impressive the ministry, it is something else. - R. Albert Mohler, Jr. -

Let me emphasize to you, friend, to be a part of a Bible-teaching church. Some may masquerade as a ministry, but unless the Scriptures are viewed highly and shared rightly, error will creep in at some point. The health of your faith depends on it.

GODLY MENTORS MUST BE PRESENT (v. 4)

*Titus 1:4 - To **Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.***

Paul was known for his strategy of mentoring. He often had a younger person shadowing him, always teaching and modeling how to minister God's truth in many settings.

Titus was a "child" of Paul's, led to faith by him at the start and spiritually raised to follow his example. Timothy was another well-known recipient of Paul's discipleship ministry. When Paul wrote another Pastoral Epistle, this one to Timothy, he instructed him to practice mentoring and make sure others did it, too.

*2 Timothy 2:2 - **and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.***

I've heard it said that it's a good idea to have a Paul in your life (a mentor), a Barnabas (a peer to encourage you) as well as a Timothy (someone you're mentoring). So many problems could be avoided if we just had people in our lives teaching us how to live out our faith and keeping us accountable. If we're untethered to a mentor, we're asking for trouble.

We never grow too old to be mentored or to be a mentor. We should place ourselves under someone wiser and more knowledgeable than ourselves in order to learn from them, then be looking for those to whom we can transmit what we have learned. The torch must be passed continuously from one generation to the next.

- Curtis C. Thomas -

So as we embark on this journey of looking over the shoulder of this older pastor giving instruction to a younger pastor, the foundation is set early. God's work that he wants to accomplish in you and me is to build our faith. It's the priority of his mission, is central to the message he has revealed to us, and requires help along the way, even as we seek to be a mentor to others.

BIBLE STUDY

Legislators and Staff (During Session)
Thursdays, 8:00 a.m.
Room 153, House Office Building