

Titus 1

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[0 : 00] In terms of Titus, Titus 1, we're going to try and deal with a chapter each time. I'm going to give you my three points at the end of the sermon. I'm going to try something slightly different in the series.

John was an elderly man. He was one of three trustees in the city of England. He was a trustee of a church that stood out as a faithful Bible teaching and preaching church.

I was preaching there for some weekend and after 29 years, John, as a trustee, was standing down. The church thanked him, gave him some golf clubs, wiped a massive bunch of flowers, and then he had 10 minutes to respond.

He prefaced the speech by saying, I'm going to give you a very boring speech. And it was, but it was memorable. Because he reminded us of the preciousness of the trust. He urged the people to protect the trust deed with our lives, which gave independence and gave the ability to keep preaching the gospel in that city.

Now, what I want to do is I want to remind you about what trustees do. Trustees are reliable. They are faithful. Trustees are dependable. You don't want a trustee who's creative.

[1 : 29] You want a trustee who you can entrust something to. And know that he or she will pass that trust on in an uncompromised way.

Now, one of the first things that the Apostle Paul tells Titus is there in verse 3. Can you see it? He says the gospel message that Paul preaches, which is vital to the church, has been entrusted to him.

By the command of God our Saviour. Paul has been brought into saving faith with God. But this verse, can you see, it's very interesting, this verse says that God has actually exercised trust. Or faith in Paul. He's entrusted to Paul the gospel message. Paul is not free to revise it, and neither are you. He's not free to change it.

He's a trustee of the message. Charles Hodge was one of the faithful theologians at Princeton University, Princeton Seminary in the US in the 19th century.

[2 : 35] And Charles Hodge said this. He said, a new idea never originated at Princeton. A new idea never originated at Princeton in those days.

Why? Because what he's saying there is the message of the word was already perfect. And you cannot improve on perfection in your creativity. And Paul wants Titus to know this at the very beginning, that he faces a mammoth task.

You can see how close he is in verse 4. He says, my true child in the common faith. And Paul had exercised what was a short evangelistic message in Crete.

And the church, some people, had become believers. And Titus has now been left behind. Look at verse 5. He's been left behind to straighten out the church.

To put what remained into order. And what was Crete like? Crete is an island. It's in the middle of the Mediterranean. It's about 200 kilometres long.

[3 : 39] And its widest is 60 kilometres wide. And it was a trouble spot in the first century. It was a centre for pirate activity. The Cretans were good pirates.

But even more, I don't mean good pirates. The Cretans were mercenaries. If you look at the chemistry books, it will tell you that they were brilliant with a bow and arrow. And if you were raising an army and you had money, you would want lots of Cretans.

And you could pay for them. And whatever the cause, it didn't really matter. If you paid the Cretans enough, they'd be sure to join you. They had loads of good archers.

And the Romans knew that Crete was a centre of trouble. And that it had to conquer it. It took three years to conquer Crete. And this little island took three legions.

That's a total of 15,000 men. 15,000 Roman soldiers came onto the island finally to quell Crete. One writer says that there was no wildlife in Crete because the population made up for it. [4 : 44] And look at verse 12. Paul is really clear, isn't he? He says one of their own prophets has said it. One of your own has said it. Cretans are liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.

Paul says, well this testimony is true, doesn't it? Verse 13. Liars, evil beasts, gluttons. Those of you who are most of the Greek will know that there's one verb that's not used very often.

It's the word a critizo. Sounds like Crete. Doesn't it? It means to lie and to cheat. Critizo. Liars, cheats, lazy gluttons. Evil groups. That's the culture.

That's the culture that Titus is going to face. Lying, cheating. In principle pushing yourself forward. Fighting any cause if the money is right.

That's the culture. What's the church like? Well the church is a reflection of the culture. We know, don't we? From Acts 2. That at Pentecost there were Cretans there.

[5 : 51] And no doubt they brought the gospel back to Crete. But verse 13, look what Paul says. It says Titus must rebuke them sharply. So that they can return to soundness in the faith.

So in other words, this church has now become compromised. Because it's become infiltrated. Verse 10 tells us that there were those of the circumcision group. In other words, there were those who came along.

And they say, well, the entrusted message. The message that Paul gave you. It isn't quite enough. It isn't adequate. You've got to add a little bit on. You've got to supplement that message. In their case, it was inadequate.

Because it didn't impose circumcision, that Jewish right. And Paul says they are empty talkers. Mere talkers, verse 10. They're deceivers.

Who say the entrusted message is not enough. Empty talkers and deceivers. Look at verse 14. They promote Jewish myths.

[6 : 52] And the commands of those who reject the truth. They come in and they teach religious abstinence. Verse 15. They urge abstinence. Don't eat this. Don't eat that food. Eat this food.

This food is unclean. Look at what Paul says in verse 15. He says, The pure, all things are pure. Paul is saying to the pure, To those who've been purified by the gospel, All food is pure.

If you've been purified by the gospel. But for those who stand outside of the gospel, And depend on rights and regulations, Well, they contaminate everything they touch.

To them, nothing is pure. They are constipated by rules, Constipated by regulations and extra add-ons. Don't eat this. Don't eat that. Abstain from it.

And Paul says, No, nothing is pure to them. And verse 11. They upset whole families. Of course they are. Can you imagine that? The son comes in and says, Well, don't eat that.

[7 : 58] Don't eat that, ma'am. Eat this. That's not allowed to be doing it. Of course they are upsetting families. You young men, you get yourself circumcised. That is very disruptive to family life.

You can imagine that act of self-sacrifice. How are you today? Oh, I'm in pain. Why? I've just been circumcised for the sake of Jesus.

It's spread like wildfire. Other young men, don't you see what Bill has done? Isn't that wonderful? Look how much he loves God. For the sake of Jesus.

Why don't you join him? It tells us, doesn't it? I think it's quite important. Not all self-sacrifice is good sacrifice. That's quite important, I think, in the Christian life.

Not all self-sacrifice is good sacrifice. Verse 11, they're upsetting whole families. And they're doing it because, verse 11, they want to get rich. It's this honest game, shameful game.

[9 : 00] If you know a sadder verse than verse 16, well, you can tell me about it later. Because verse 16 at the end of this chapter could be a description, couldn't it, of the population of Crete.

But it's so sad and it's so tragic because it's a description of the church in Crete. They are detestable, they are disobedient, they are unfit for any good work.

That's the church. And so Titus holds the context of rotten culture, rotten church. And Paul says, Timothy, get them in order. Straighten them out.

He says to Titus, straighten them out. Now imagine that, a culture of liars. Where the media can't be trusted. Where you can't believe everything you read in the newspapers.

Or hear in the news. Fake news, imagine that. Imagine that, evil brutes. Corrupt politicians that you can't believe what they say. Banks that you can't trust.

[10:06] Financial institutions that you can't take their word. Imagine that, and lazy gluttons. Where overindulgence is epidemic. Of course, it's our culture, isn't it?

And here we are, Titus, you get the church in order. Oh, the culture has transformed the church. And in order to transform the culture, Titus, you've got to go back to the church and transform it. And get the church in order. Well, how do you do that? Well, it's not too difficult. Look at verse 5. Titus, I want you to know, this is why I left you in Crete.

So that you might put what remained in order. And here it is. And appoint elders in every town. As I directed you. That's what you need to do. Now here's the problem.

Here's the solution. Elders in every town. And I can imagine Titus saying, are you mocking me? It's like saying, the answer to the drought is rain.

[11:16] That's all very well, isn't it? But where are you going to get rain from? The answer to famine is food. But where are you going to get food from? And the answer to the problem is in Crete, our mature leadership.

But where are you going to get mature leadership from? It's a big question. Verse 7. We want leaders who are overseers. Who recognise that they actually are God's stewards. Trustees of the message.

Verse 9. We need leaders who hold firm. The trustworthy words to the entrusted message. And Paul says to Titus, appoint them in every town. Very good.

Where do I get them from? It's like the group of tourists that went to the old Balkan village. And they see an old man sitting outside of a cafe.

And they come to him and they say to him, have any famous men been born in this village? No, the old man says. We only have babies born here. You see, mature leaders, you don't just get them born.

[12:24] Something must happen, take place. Where do mature leaders come from? And so what I want to say to you, one of the reasons why I kind of want to look at Titus, is because the problem in Israel was always a problem of leadership.

And the problem of any Christian organisation is leadership. The problems in any church are problems of leadership. What is the answer?

Well, yes, appoint elders in every town. Where are they? Now I put it to you that as we read through Titus over the next few weeks, in each chapter of Titus there's going to be one long sentence that I think is the key to unlock each chapter.

And it's the long sentence which is the key. And the long sentence is here in verses 1 to 4. It begins with the word Paul. And it ends with a full stop at Jesus Christ our Saviour.

At the end of verse 4. It's one long sentence. Not in English, but it is the original. And notice it's a very, very long introduction, isn't it?

[13:32] To a very short letter. Now the letter is 46 verses, that's all. Here's a very long introduction. So let's go through it. Paul, it literally means little.

Servant of God literally means slave. No rights. So the death of a slave, there was no request required. No investigation. The family relationship of a slave, irrelevant.

Not recognised. The slave has no rights. But Paul goes on. Look at verse 1. An apostle of Jesus Christ. That is an authoritative messenger of Jesus Christ himself.

Not self-appointed, but by God's selection. By God's appointment. So little slave apostle of Jesus Christ.

And the purpose of the apostleship, look at verse 1. It's for the sake of the faith of God's elect. And so God is going to call his people to faith through the apostle Paul.

[14:37] He's appointed the apostle Paul as his messenger. Through whom he will call the elect. I love that little section in Corinth. Paul is in Corinth.

It's pretty hard. It's discouraging. It's a dark place. And God appears to him one night. Do you remember? In Acts 18. And he says, Paul, do not be afraid. And I gather from that. That the apostle Paul.

Is apt to be afraid. We don't think Paul was scared. But he probably was then. Keep on speaking. Don't be silent. We don't think of Paul.

Do we as hesitating to preach. But there must have been hesitation. Because I am with you, God says. No one is going to harm you. Because I've got many people in this place. I think that's a magnificent verse.

Paul, you keep on. Because you are my chosen instrument. And as you preach and teach. I'm going to do my work. And I'm going to call out the elect.

[15:33] And Paul makes it clear. That what was quite clear to him. At the very beginning of his apostleship. That he's there for the sake of the Gentiles. And their leaders. And the people. And the kings of Israel. He is there as an instrument.

That God is going to use. To call people to faith. The elect. Paul doesn't know who the elect are. And neither do you.

And neither do I. But God is going to call the elect out. Through his ministry. There's more to it than that. Notice in verse 1.

His purpose is not only evangelistic. Calling out an elect. But it's also for the knowledge of the truth. Which accords to godliness. And so Paul.

Through his teaching. And preaching. Is going to bring people to a growth of knowledge. And he's going to bring people to maturity. As believers. And their lives are going to be shaped. And they're going to become godly.

[16:32] So Paul knows. That through the same entrusted word. Which brings people to faith. It's the same word. Which is going to bring them to maturity. And when I worked for British Telecom.

Half an hour a week. And you're training. It's great. Kind of. You were off the phones. It's just great. You just. Someone just stand at the front. I can't remember. Very very little. Of what I learned in that training. But I do remember this.

Someone came in. And they said that. British Telecom. Were looking for T-shaped workers. That's the kind of people. They were looking for. I don't know. The businesses still say that. They were looking for people.

Who on the vertical plane. Had a really clear understanding. Of their studies. And what they were about. Now that was the vertical plane.

But on the horizontal plane. They had the ability to take that deep knowledge. And their science. And to apply it broadly. Now notice here.

[17:28] Paul is looking. This is for T-shaped workers. Paul is here. He wants people to know the gospel. Through him the gospel has changed them completely.

And he wants them to understand the multifaceted aspects of the gospel. They've seen that. They understand the gospel that it brings them to God. And the implications.

Which go broadly into every area of life. Verse 2. This faith and this knowledge. Rests on the long promised.

Hope of eternal life. Which God. Who is not like the Cretans. Can you see that in verse 2. God never lies. Promised.

And he's now brought to life. Through the preaching of the gospel. So God. Saving God. Is the God who entrusts this message. To Paul.

[18:30] And it's all about eternal life. And it's all about calling people to faith. And it's all about bringing people to maturity. And first of all. The gospel is all about. Grace.

And peace. So there's your long sentence. So I says. I'm going to leave you in a rotten culture. I'm leaving you with a compromised. An infiltrated church. I'm leaving you.

But with this entrusted message. And this entrusted message. Will bring people to faith. To godliness. And to maturity. And that's where you get your elders from. That's how Christians are made.

This is how maturity comes about. And so you appoint elders in every town. Prayerful.

Perseverance. Now notice.

That this entrusted message. This gospel. Which brings us to life. Is also the gospel. We never leave behind. And so the way in.

[19:27] Is the way on. And it's to dominate our life. And it was to dominate Titus' life. In ministry. Because it's the gospel. Which brings people to faith. It's the same gospel.

Which understood. And all its brilliance. Will bring people on. We'll never graduate beyond it. We'll never leave it behind.

So what does this Christian maturity look like? Look at verse 6. The elders are to be above reproach. In the home. And there's no public.

And no private divide. Very very important. Our politicians say. That is a private matter. But no. Not for Christian leadership.

There are no private matters. It is all public. Look at verse 7. There are five negatives. In verse 7. Leaders are not to be arrogant.

[20 : 24] That is. They're not to be bossy. Or overbearing. And stubborn. They're not to be quick. Tempered. Elders are not to be irritable. And impatient. They're not to be drunkards. They're not to be indulgent.

And ill disciplined. They are not to be violent. Now notice that. I don't want to say. Leaders. Initiate. They must. Initiate.

But not aggressively. So they're violent. They're not to be like that. And they're not to be greedy. For gain. They're not to be in it.

For the money. Check your heart. Look at your motives. And then. As though the knots are not enough. Look at this. Eight. There are six positives. They're to be hospitable.

They're to be lovers of strangers. Coming into the house. The elder himself. Is to be hospitable. Lovers of stranger. Lover of good and charity. They're to have an open hand. And that's what we have to do.

[21 : 23] Self-controlled. Yes. Sober. Sensible. Watch yourself. Don't overindulge. Upright. Just. Righteous. Holy.

Devout. A growing Christ like this. It just means. There's a mastery of self being described here. So here is this godly character. This growing knowledge of the truth.

Which comes as we have this wonderful gospel. Now. Just notice this. The apostle Paul doesn't say anything about gifts here. And he doesn't say anything about academic qualifications.

It's about character. It's about godliness. The gospel accords with this godliness. I remember reading about Don Carson's mother.

And somebody asked. I'm Don Carson's mother. Don Carson's theologian. She asked Don Carson's mother. What do you do Mrs. Carson? Mrs. Carson said.

[22 : 23] I'm a builder. Oh. What do you build? I build character. Isn't that great? You mums. When you're asked next.

What do you do? So actually I'm a builder. I build character. That's what we do as parents. We build character. We seek to build character. In the people for whom we're responsible.

Not only by modelling. But by teaching God's word. Now notice. What you notice is that all of these people stand out in the culture. They're not typical creatures. So go to verse 6. If anyone is above reproach.

The husband of one wife. And his children are believers. And not open to the charge of debauchery. Or insubordination. Then let your eyes go down to verse 11. Well these people are household records.

They've set whole families. Verse 7. Can you see that? They're not greedy for gain. But verse 11. The contrast is. These ones. Everything they do is motivated by what?

[23 : 21] By verse 11. Shameful gain. At verse 7. The elders to be. Not violent. And not quick tempered.

But all around them. Verse 12. The creatures. Are wild evil brutes. Verse 9. They are to instruct in sound doctrine. Verse 11.

They are to teach the things which ought not to be taught. That's what the creatures do. And that's why the entrusted message from God is so precious. It's our greatest treasure isn't it?

Titus. I'm leaving you behind with this great task. But I'm leaving you behind with this God empowered resource. And so we must never ever water down the message.

And it must never be compromised. And it must never be added to. And there are cultures that will put great pressure on you to add to this gospel. And the world will put pressure on you because the world hates this gospel.

[24 : 21] Because it's exclusive. There is not a version of the gospel. There is only one gospel. And it's so humbling.

It's so, so humbling that I don't actually offer to God anything but myself. Nothing in my hand I bring. And what the world hates will start to trickle into the church as well.

And it's incredible to me that the world which hates the gospel is actually tantalized by it. Where do you get leaders of integrity?

Isn't that a question that our culture is asking particularly at the moment? Where do you get leaders of un-kind of varnished and untarnished performance?

Where did the Billy Grahams come from? I've talked a few of you this week. But I used and read about Billy Grahams, too. Not the great evangelist. When his children got up to speak.

[25 : 27] They all were given three minutes each to speak. And they all went way over their three minutes in talking about their father. Then his youngest son, Nelson, gets up.

And he says, my siblings have all talked too long. I'll tell you in much less than three minutes about my father. He was fat. He was faithful.

He was available. And teachable. Fat. And he sat down. It's great, isn't it? Where does that fatness come from?

How can a man who's thought so much for so many people at the age of 99 still be teachable?

Where does it come from? The world is tantalized by that. But listen to Billy Grahams.

It's all about, it's all because of the gospel. Listen to Christchurch. He was the Secretary General of the Soviet Union.

[26 : 29] He said in his last interview, communism's failure is its failure to produce the selfless man. That was his last interview. I don't know what they did with him after that.

But that is the problem, isn't it? Some people say the answer is education. But C.S. Lewis said, you can educate the devil, but you'll just have a more educated devil. There's a film.

And I can't remember the film. Some of you might remember the film. I've tried to search for it. Even Google can't help me. There's a young guy who's taken to the door of an institution of brothel. And a woman comes to this door.

And the man says, I'm giving you this boy. He's 16 years of age. In two hours, I'll return and I'll pick up a man. What is going to transform the boy into a man?

Well, according to Hollywood, it's all sorts of illicit activities that he'll be involved in. But that is nonsense. The world has no solutions. Read Paul Johnson's classics.

[27 : 33] The intellectuals. Brilliant man. Marx. Tolstoy. Herringway. Starter. Brilliant minds. Morally bankrupt. The Times Literary Editor wrote, Literary history teaches us that some of the most profound and moving works of art were written by awful men and women.

The world has no answer. Charles Darwin, the author of the evolutionary theory and survival of the fittests, was asked, in one of your exploits, you'll wash the shore of a foreign soil and what do you do?

And Darwin said, I would pray that the message of the missionary had reached us far. I'd pray that the gospel had come and transformed cannibals. Darwin said, Where do I get leaders?

I need, I get it from faithful, prayerful, persistent, ordinary, gospel ministry. Faith, knowledge, hope. The message entrusted to me by the command of God my Saviour.

So you ask the world this one question, How do you get from 1 to 12? Can you see that? How do you get from 1 to 12 to 12? What's more about, aren't we?

[28 : 53] How do you get from 1 to 12 to 2 to 12? How do you get a person from being a liar, an evil brute, and a lazy glutton? How do you get them to 2 to 12 saying no to ungodliness, worldly passions, and saying yes to self-control upright godly lives?

And the world has got absolutely no answer. They've got nothing to offer you. But it is only through the message of 1, 1 to 4.

And when the world is confronted by this, when it's confronted by people who used to be misers, but now they're generous, by people who are proud and now they're humble, by reckless people who become faithful, by selfish people who become serving, they will look for any other reason, but it is only the gospel.

Titus, you know that, so appoint elders in every town. And here's your greatest resource in ministry. It's been entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour.

You can read history. And it'll show you this. So in 1789, Fletcher Crispin leads mutiny on the ship Bounty, captained by Captain William Blythe.

[30 : 03] They were a debauched, drunken community of mutineers. What happens? Two men eventually, John Adams and Neddy, get into Captain Blythe's trunk in the captain's cabin, and they discover two books.

King James Version of the Bible, and the 1662 copy of the Anglican Prayer Book. And by the time that community is discovered in 1811, it is an ideal community.

It's been transformed. No crime, no judges, no police force. Because God specialises in change and transformation, and he does it through his word of the gospel.

Titus, I'm leaving you behind to straighten out. It's a crumbling culture, and a compromised church. And appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. Here's the three points. One to four, here's how to get Christian maturity. Number five, verses five to nine, appoint godly men like this, who are products of the gospel.

[31 : 06] And point three, I'm not hiding from you the difficulty of the situation. Here's a dire situation they will confront.

Here's the task. Here's the trust. And here's the only effective instrument. Let's pray.