

Leading as if Lives Depend on It

Titus 1:1-4 - NCBC, February 7, 2016

Main Point: **Godly leaders trust God and His gospel to transform people.**

5 Commitments of Godly Leaders

- Right **Authority** (vv. 1a, 3b)
- Right **Mission** (v. 1b)
- Right **Confidence** (v. 2.)
- Right **Method** (v. 3a)
- Right **Community** (v. 4)

Application: **Christian, live out God's gospel since others depend on it.**

Opening Announcements:

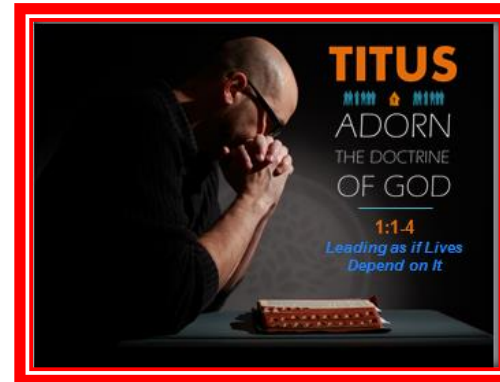
Today we welcome our local Boy Scout troop as they help us with our ushering today. Today is Scout Sunday, and we are thankful to be the Chartered Organization for the local troop led by Tim Trantham, Jay Wright, and others.

Women's **Reach Out** Event – **Friday Feb 26th**. It's going to be a sweet night of fellowship together as sisters in Christ, sharing life with one another and hearing from God's word on what it means to "Reach out."
Feel free to invite your friends.

Baptisms today at 12 noon in S. Sanctuary.

Team of 18 leaving for BTC Conference today.

<<This I Believe>>



Amen. Thank you Tom and team.

Speaking of Tom, we want you to know that we have scheduled some **guest worship leaders** the rest of this month as Tom and his wife Jennifer plan to welcome their 4th child into their family any day now. We so appreciate Tom's musical leadership every week, but are thankful to be able to give him and his family some well-earned time off as they have this new baby. So as others come to lead us in worship the next several weeks, please give them a warm New Castle welcome, and let's also love on our own Tom and Jennifer Felix as we appreciate how they sacrificially serve us every week in our worship together. I'm sure when Tom returns to leading us in March he will come with a full slideshow of pictures of the new baby, right? 😊

I now invite you to prepare for the public reading of God's Word from **Titus 1**. If you do not have a Bible with you today, our ushers are coming now to give you a Bible. Please catch their attention as they pass by and it would be our joy to give you a Bible. You are welcome to take this Bible home as our gift to you, or just simply return it after our service by placing it on the table in the back of the room.

Today we begin a brand new preaching series on Paul's letter to Titus. There are at least 2 reasons why I believe this letter is a timely study for us here and now:

- First, Titus provides practical instruction to help us **advance our understanding of spiritual leadership**. Like our elders shared last week in our Annual Meeting, we are praying that God's Spirit would strengthen every member's understanding and practice of spiritual leadership in the ministries that God has sovereignly placed you in this year. Titus will encourage every one of us towards greater joy in sound living and doctrine.
- Second Paul wrote this letter to strengthen the churches at Crete in their faith and living so that ultimately, they would be a more effective witness to their unsaved neighbors and communities. And loved ones – we live together in the middle of a white-harvest. We are surrounded by people lost in their sins who will go to hell when they die unless God chooses to rescue them by His grace.

Church – we are part of God's rescuing means – for together we are God's voice-box– for our neighbors to come to personally know eternal life. Titus is going to challenge us over the next couple of months – to grow in our witness as we better understand how sound doctrine always produces sound living.

The entire letter to Titus is only 46 verses long – but it has the power to transform our lives. Pray that God's Spirit will teach you – convict you – transform you through this study. Our life is too short to just go through the paces, right? So let's eagerly pick up the text – and ask God to have His way with us this morning.

Our focus this morning is on **Titus 1:1-4**. You can find this text on page **998** of the Bibles we've handed out. Please stand with me now in honor of God's Word, as I read **Titus 1:1-4** this morning from the ESV translation:

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,² in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began³ 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;

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

These are the words of God. You may be seated.

Let's Pray.

I thank God for the privilege of being trained for ministry by a group of seasoned pastors and biblical scholars who truly loved Christ, were life-long students of His Word, and who were committed in their shepherding love towards me. My 4 years of being trained at The Master's Seminary is a spiritual highlight for me. I'm so thankful God gave me the privilege to learn from such wise and Spirit-led elders in God's church.

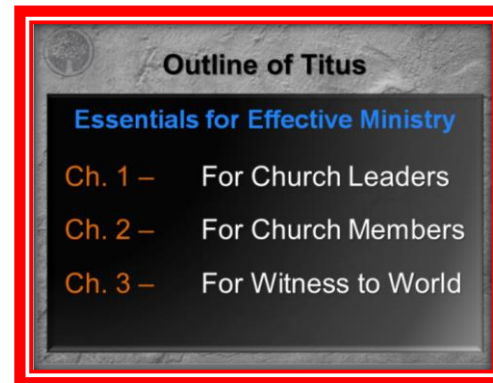
I remember one of the first days I was at the seminary, walking around a corner and seeing the institution's motto engraved on a large wall – The Master's Seminary – “We Train Men as if Lives depend on it.”

That motto really resonates with me. Faithful men, prayerfully equipping younger men to rightly divide the Word – all because real lives depend on the future ministries of their graduates. I'm so thankful for the privilege of being trained and discipled by men who took seriously the biblical charge to equip other believers for the work of the ministry.

Now consider the verses we just read together from Titus 1:1-4. Here we see that Paul communicates the same seriousness and urgency in his mission. He leads as if lives depend on it – for indeed they do. God's sovereign grace is communicated to real lives through the faithful ministry of God's bond-slaves.

Paul wanted the Gospel ministry on the island of Crete to be spiritually effective. Just like we all desire for God's

Spirit to bear much fruit for His glory through our ministry together here in central Illinois. And so he wrote to Titus to communicate Gospel essentials for effective ministry:



In **chapter 1**, Paul highlights the necessary theology, character, and conduct of church leaders. **Chapter 2** emphasizes the character and conduct of effective church members, and **chapter 3** powerfully reminds both the leaders and members how their character and conduct serves as an effective witness to the watching world.

So Paul is here writing to all the churches in Crete through Titus so that they might together build strong churches who would be effective in sharing the Gospel with their unbelieving communities.

Church - I pray that God would demonstrate His saving power to our communities through His saved people here. If you share my desire to see God's good gospel overflow in good works through our lives together... you are really going to enjoy going deeper into Titus together!

A bit more background to help set the stage this morning:



Paul wrote Titus between his 1st and 2nd Roman Imprisonments – sometime before 67 AD. Sometime after being released from prison in Rome, he and Titus had traveled to the island of Crete – the largest island of Greece, and enjoyed a time of gospel ministry there.

From the record of Pentecost in **Acts 2:11**, we know that some Jewish believers from Crete who were at Jerusalem had heard the gospel preached in their own language... so it's likely that Paul and Titus found some newer believers on the island already when they arrived. But their spiritual understanding of the Gospel was yet weak. They were still too heavily influenced by Jewish traditions and practices. And their theology and lifestyles as Christ-followers needed to be put into order in the context of new local churches.

So in **Titus 1:5**, we learn that when Paul left to continue his missionary travels, he left Titus behind to appoint

elders in every town – to help strengthen these young believers in their new churches – for their greater effectiveness in their communities.

So now that Titus had spent some time ministering at Crete, Paul sends this brief letter with Zenas and Apollos¹ to encourage all the churches through Titus. And as he starts the letter in our verses this morning, he wants Titus to understand very clearly that,



Godly leaders trust God and His gospel to transform people.

The work of making disciples and building strong churches is a supernatural work. It's an all-important work to be sure-eternity depends on it in many ways. But Godly leaders put their trust in God and His gospel to transform people.

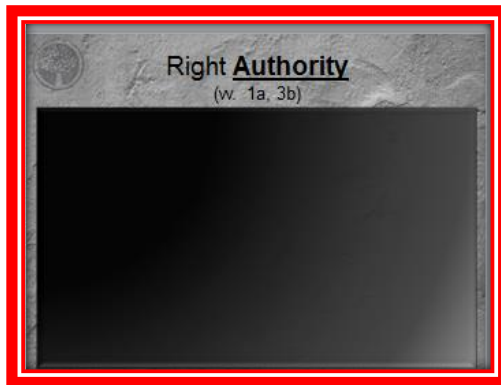
¹ Titus 3:13

Now this morning you may say, I'm not an elder or a deacon or deaconess in church, so what can I apply from this text this morning?

Child of God – you have been supernaturally commissioned to be a disciple-maker. And disciple-makers lead disciples. So while the first application is for church leaders, in truth today's message is relevant for every believer who desires to fulfill your earthly calling.

So this morning as we study Paul's greetings and salutations to Titus, I want us to note **5 Commitments of Godly Leaders**. Five commitments of disciple-makers that are imperative to leading as if lives depend on it.

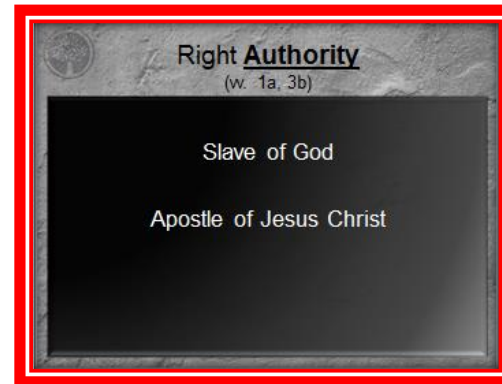
First, godly leaders like the apostle Paul are committed to the,



Right Authority (vv. 1a, 3b)

Notice how Paul introduces himself to Titus and the young churches who will read this letter. By this time in

his ministry, he was the well-known apostle to the Gentiles. But here, he starts right out of the gate by using the term *doulos*, meaning slave.



Paul, a slave of God...and an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Paul could have boasted about all his achievements, his training, his accomplishments...but instead, he appeals to his authority as a slave of God.

Simple men have no basis for leading others in their own flesh. But in the great commission, Christ said all authority rested in Him, and then He commanded us to go and engage in disciple-making ministry.

Loved ones – if you are a Christian – **1 Cor 6:20** teaches us that you are no longer your own, but you've been bought with a price. The blood of Jesus Christ has

purchased you from the slave block of sin,² and now that you are freed from sin you are enslaved to God and His righteousness. And because we no longer belong to ourselves, we should no longer live for ourselves, but for Him to died and rose again on our behalf.³

So ask yourself this morning, who did you live for last week? Whose message are you trying to promote?

All godly leaders understand this... we don't preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord and Master, and ourselves as His servants for your sake.⁴

Godly leaders serve under the divine authority of God Himself. Our trust is in the Lord and His power and authority – not our own.

The 2nd commitment of godly leadership is to the



Right Mission (v. 1b)

Note the three-legged goal of Paul's ministry at the end of verse 1:

I'm a slave and messenger of God and Jesus Christ to you for this purpose:

For the sake of the faith of God's elect, and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness...



² 1 Peter 1:18-19

³ 2 Cor 5:15

⁴ 2 Cor 4:5

Faith of God's elect, their knowledge of the truth, and their growing response of godliness.

First Paul says the chief purpose of his ministry was to help bring God's elect to saving faith in Jesus Christ. This is **evangelism**. His life is being expended to "bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of God's Name among all the nations."⁵ Like he wrote later in **2 Timothy 2:10**,

Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

This is the mission of all disciple-makers. **Our mission is to see the supernatural evidence of saving faith from the lives of those whom God sovereignly redeems.** We long to help others believe in Jesus Christ! There is salvation in no other.

And loved ones – though it wounds our self-sufficiency and pride, we must not chafe against this biblical doctrine of God's gracious election.

The scriptures are clear in this majestic teaching. God sovereignly chooses who He will graciously rescue according to the eternal purposes of His own will (Eph 1:4-6).

⁵ Rom 1:5

John 6:29 says "It is the work of God to even believe in Him whom God has sent." **Ephesians 2:8** teaches us that faith itself is a gift of God. Jesus taught in John 6 that "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all." Salvation is entirely and completely God's work according to His own choosing and sovereign election.

And yet ...Scripture is also clear that all people are responsible to believe in Him. No one goes to hell apart from their own self-determined rejection of Christ. Every person is commanded to believe on Christ, and repent from their sins, ... and all who come to Christ shall never be cast out.⁶

And so here we find the joyful reality of God's gospel.

Saving faith activates or demonstrates the election of God. When the Gospel is clearly preached to those who have been chosen by God, at some point the Holy Spirit awakens their hearts to believe and enter into the joys of eternal life.

Loved one – this is a great mystery but also a great comfort. The doctrine of God's sovereign grace motivates our evangelism to all people – for we have the confidence that all those whom God has elected unto salvation will demonstrate God's grace through their

⁶ John 6:37

personal faith and repentance – just as in **Acts 13:48** where “all who were appointed for eternal life believed.”

So his God-given authority compels Paul to minister for the purpose of bringing about saving faith – helping people believe in Christ. But faith needs an object; faith trusts in something, and that’s why all godly leaders also purpose to edify others in their **knowledge of the truth**.

Now think with me for a moment about this phrase. The truth here is speaking of God’s Gospel. Coming to know and experience and understand the Gospel realities in a deeply personal and profound way that transforms my life. More than just head knowledge... this phrase in verse 1 is really a technical term for conversion.

For the 4 believers being baptized today, we could rightly say God has brought them to a knowledge of the truth. You can’t be godly if you don’t know what God is like. You can’t be godly if you don’t know the Gospel declarations and obligations that are revealed in His Word.

God’s gospel will always produce godliness. This is vital for all spiritual leadership in the church – since discipleship in brief is the promotion of the gospel among God’s people.

If you are going to exert influence upon others as if lives depend on it – then you must get your mission right. The goal of all spiritual leadership is to help people experience saving faith and come to know the Gospel in a real and personal way that encourages authentic godliness in their lives. The biblical gospel is the power of God unto salvation for every person who believes it – and that same gospel leads to sanctification as it produces increasing godliness.

I guess we could say it this way – saving faith always works. The Gospel will always transform a life from ungodliness to holy living. Always.

This is a major emphasis in Titus. Sadly there were some professing believers in Crete whose lives denied their profession. They professed, but did not possess eternal life. Little undermines a compelling witness for the Gospel than such obvious hypocrisy.

So spiritual leaders are committed to trust God and His gospel to really transform people – as they labor earnestly with the right authority in the right mission: Evangelism, Edification, and Encouragement towards more and more holiness over time as we grow deeper and deeper into a personal submission to God’s transforming gospel.

All this combines with the



Right **Confidence** (v. 2.)

Paul's confidence or firm hope in verse 2 is eternal life. It is his confident assurance of God's promises being fulfilled through eternal life that provides an additional reason and basis for his ministry.



"Hope" here is not speaking of a wishful thinking, like "I hope it happens." No. Here Paul is confident in his anticipation of the future that is to come.

The hope of eternal life gives encouragement for service and endurance in suffering.

Spiritual leadership is often a thankless responsibility. Sheep bite. All disciple-makers must pass through deep valleys and sloughs of despond. But godly leaders cling tightly to a right confidence that our present sufferings are tethered to an eternal reward.⁷

What is the basis for such strong hope?

God's promises. Promise Theology. God made a promise in the eternal counsel of His own Trinity before time ever began, that all who believe on Him will be saved.⁸ And contrary to the Cretans... God never lies.

You won't catch the loaded language that Paul uses in verse 2 unless you scan down to verse 12 below. There Paul says,

Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.

⁷ 2 Cor 4:16-18

⁸ 2 Tim 1:9, cf. Jn 17:24

The reputation of these people was deplorable. They were known liars and manipulators. What would be the hope for the godly leader seeking to serve such a people?

The promises of an unlying God. A God whose name is the great I AM that I AM.⁹ God by definition, is truth. He is that which corresponds to reality, for He is that which is, has been, and always will be!¹⁰

Church – our God cannot lie! His promises are sure. And verse 2 goes on to say, now at this proper time, through the apostolic ministry of Paul – the promises of God's Gospel are being more fully manifested through his preaching.

And that brings us to the 4th commitment of godly leaders that we discern from Paul's salutation this morning. Because godly leaders trust God and His gospel to transform people, they must be committed to the

⁹ Ex. 3:14

¹⁰ Rev 1:4,8



Right Method (v. 3a)

The way godly leaders seek to influence and lead others is by



Preaching God's gospel. God's promises must be known. They are the gospel truths which have power to make believers partakers of God's divine nature, as we

progressively grow in the knowledge of God's grace and truth.¹¹

Paul says clearly in verse 3 that the command of God our Savior has charged him or put him in the trust to preach His Word. To preach the good news that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. That God became a man and took on flesh – but never sinned. That Jesus Christ did for us what we could never do for ourselves – in that He lived a perfect life, and then laid down his life as our substitute – shedding His perfect blood as the payment that our own sins demanded...for the wages of sin is death. So Christ died in our place – and then rose again in our place as well – so that now whoever believes on Jesus Christ shall be saved and be completely transformed by God's Spirit from the inside out!

It's a miraculous transformation...only possible by God's doing.

So godly leaders reject all worldly traditions and mindsets for how to manipulate people or guide people through change-management or self-improvement. Godly leaders trust God and God alone to transform people. And that's why our lives and our lips are constantly showing and telling the good news of Christ's rescuing grace.

¹¹ 2 Pet 1:3, 3:18

Do you know Christ this morning? Look carefully with me at the end of verse 3 and the end of verse 4. What do you notice?

God our Savior. Jesus Christ our Savior. Church – glory in this truth this morning. Our Triune God is a God of sovereign grace. He is Lord ...and Savior! Cry out to Him. There is no sin habit too dark for Him to rescue you from this morning! There is no relationship that is too broken for Him to redeem and restore. Our God Saves!

And when God rescues you from the slum, He moves you to His royal palace...and you are forever ruined for a life of sin back in the slum. His saving grace is too powerful. His cleansing is too deep. So much so that 1 John 3 teaches that if we continue to live in an unbroken habit of sin after we profess faith in Christ – we have no reason for assurance – for the spiritual transformation that God's Spirit works through the preaching of His Gospel is all-powerful and able to progressively transform our lives from the inside out.

Doesn't that give you hope this morning? I believe Paul's introduction to his letter to Titus would have bolstered the courage of Titus and the Cretan believers as well. For in verse 4, Paul shows us the fifth commitment of a godly leader -



Right Community (v. 4)

In verse 4 – Paul refers to his partner Titus as

My true child in a common faith



This is so packed with meaning.

Like the young Ephesian pastor Timothy, Titus was likely brought to faith in Christ under Paul's preaching, so in a spiritual realm, he was one of Paul's spiritual children.

But he makes a point when he uses the word common. For Titus was an uncircumcised Greek,¹² and of course Paul was a former Jew of the Jews. But now, in Christ – they had a common faith together. All the barriers of outward religiosity had been demolished by the electing grace of a rescuing God!

For Titus' ministry to be effective in Crete, he would have to earn the hearing of those Judaizers who were suspicious of this New Message preached by Gentiles. So the apostle Paul wants the church to know right from the beginning – in Christ, he and Titus are on equal ground.

They were part of God's fraternity of grace and peace. God's grace is unmerited favor and help. Grace is what brings salvation, and peace is the wondrous result. And where does such grace and peace have its source?

From God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. God Himself is the source of all that we need. He Himself is the source of all our communal provisions – for when we know God – we have all the help and rest that our souls require.

¹² See Gal 2:1-3 and Acts 15. Titus was Paul's model of a born-again, Spirit-filled Gentile convert, who didn't need to obey Moses' law or be circumcised to be saved.



Godly leaders trust God and His gospel to transform people as they commitment themselves to the right authority, the right mission, the right confidence, the right method, and the right community.

So may I come alongside you this morning, and urge you...



Christian, to live out God's gospel since others depend on it.

True genuine salvation is one of the key themes of this letter – because Paul understands that God's gospel power is the necessary foundation for all effective ministry. And where God's gospel is at home in a soul – it will bear obvious fruit. Growth in godliness that God uses to draw others to believe in His grace for their own eternal destiny.

Church – we are simple and weak sheep in the midst of a world full of wolves. We have an enemy who is a lion¹³ – roaring about and seeking whom He may devour...and we are but simple sheep.

Have you ever seen a sophisticated sheep? Who are we trying to fool as we seek to adopt the proud ways of an unbelieving world in an effort to improve upon the gospel commitments of godly leadership and disciple-making. Do we really believe that God and His gospel are powerful enough and sufficient to transform real people with real sin habits?

By the electing mercies of God – I believe God's Word. He has convinced me that His promises are true. And so based on the commission which He has given to each of us in His Name – may we labor together this week in the hope of eternal life – seeking to help others have faith, grow in their knowledge of the Gospel, and demonstrate growing godliness – all as we together lean entirely on His grace...and experience His blessed peace.

¹³ 1 Peter 5:8



Church – may our lives adorn the gospel of God with holiness this week.

Let's pray. **Closing prayer.**

Closing Song – <<There is a Redeemer>>

Benediction

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.
Jude 24