

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Good evening church,

Last week we finished our study through the book of Ezra, if you missed any of the studies, they are on the church website.

We are going to start a new book this evening.

We are going to the New Testament.

We are going to start our study through the Epistle of Paul to Titus.

Let's pray...

[Tit 1:1-9 NKJV] 1 Paul, 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, 2 in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, 3 but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior; 4 To Titus, a true son in [our] common faith: Grace, mercy, [and] peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. 5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you-- 6 if a man is blameless,

the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, 8 but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

Usually before I begin a study on a book, I like to do a brief introduction.

The first thing I want to go over is

Who is the individual that this letter is addressed to – Titus.

Titus was a Greek believer (Gal 2:3) who came to know the Lord by the way of Paul.

After his conversion, Titus served alongside Paul as the gospel was continued to be preached among the gentiles.

Paul mentions Titus by name multiple times in his 2 epistle to the church in Corinth.

[2Co 8:23 NKJV] 23 If [anyone inquires] about Titus, [he is] my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren [are inquired about, they are] messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.

As Paul and Titus continued preaching the gospel, one of the places they traveled to was the island of Crete.

As the residents of Crete responded in faith and were saved, there were small groups of believers that started to form throughout the island.

As Paul moved on in his missionary journeying, he leaves Titus in charge of the church in Crete.

Why did Paul write this epistle to Titus?

Paul wrote the epistle to Titus because there were problems within the church in Crete.

The people in Crete had a terrible reputation in the Mediterranean world for ungodliness. People lived the way they wanted to live -

There were issues with the lack of qualified leaders within the church.

There were people teaching false doctrines.

Some were mixing works with grace

And others were abusing the message of grace.

So Paul writes this epistle to Titus so that he can correct the problems.

[Tit 1:1-16 NKJV] 1 Paul, 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.**

This letter was written to Titus, but it was also written to the Christians on the island of Crete.

You see, Paul knew this letter would be publicly read among the churches on the island. So, in the structure of opening the letter, Paul took great care to tell the Christians of Crete what his credentials were, and where he stood on important issues.

So he begins with his credentials – this is his calling card.

The first one he lists is one of a bondservant of God.

The word that Paul uses here for bondservant in the Greek, is the word *doulos* – which means a lowly slave – it was a slave by choice.

As believers – we are slaves redeemed by Jesus Christ -

**[1Co 6:19-20 NKJV] 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 and in your spirit, which are God's.**

As believers, you and I are slaves, but we are slaves that Jesus set free to serve Him voluntarily!

We have to remember that it is our voluntary service He desires, as the expression of our love for Him.

Not only did Paul list a bondservant of God as one of his credentials – he also lists an apostle of Jesus Christ –

He is a messenger – he is one who has been sent forth with orders.

And that is exactly what Paul did –

He responded to the calling that God had bestowed upon him.

Church, I believe that it is very important for every believer to know our own calling and purpose among the body of Christ.

And the only way we are going to find out is by seeking Him in prayer and by serving in the church.

according to the faith of God's elect

"According to" means that the first goal of Paul's apostleship was "the faith of God's elect."

His goal was to bring sinners to salvation.

To stir up faith in the people God has chosen – His elect.

"God's elect" are those who respond to the Gospel and have trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Listen to what Peter writes -

[1Pe 1:1-5 NKJV] 1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 **elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father**, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. 3 Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Not only was Paul to stir up the faith in the elect – he was then to instruct them as saints in how to live –

That is the last part of verse 1 - acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness,

"The acknowledgment of the truth" is instruction in the truth which gives the believer knowledge of God and of what God has done for the believer.

As we draw closer to the word of God, by reading and meditating and living it – it then leads to godliness.

Faith in Jesus and knowledge of the truth in His Word leads to godliness.

Godliness will then lead to visible manifestations of godly behavior.

Once again, I have to remind you that your works do not save you – that is not what Paul is stating here.

Paul is especially careful to make this point in this letter because one of the problems Titus faced was false teachers who were saying that faith plus works was necessary for salvation.

That has never been true, nor will it ever be true!

Salvation is by grace through faith, plus absolutely nothing.

[Eph 2:8-10 NKJV] 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; [it is] the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

A person who has come to trust in Jesus will find himself changing from the inside out.

God has brought us out of darkness and into light.

A changed life looks like a life of good works.

But we don't do good works to be saved; we do good works because we've been changed.

**2 in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began,
3 but has in due time manifested His word through preaching,**

Before time or history or the human race began, God established a plan of salvation.

"The hope of eternal life" is something "God, Who cannot lie promised before time began."

In eternity past God made a way of salvation for you and me to spend eternity future with Him.

This is our hope – spending eternity with Him in His presence.

It is not wishful thinking.

Our hope is founded on the promise from the God who cannot lie.

That plan – that promise is manifested in time to the human race by the preaching of the Gospel.

This truth of God's salvation that has been present since before creation is now being made obvious through the practice of "preaching" or "proclaiming" that good news.

(3b)which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior;

Paul's ministry was "committed" to him; it was God's, and Paul was simply a steward.

To the churches in Galatia – Paul wrote

[Gal 1:11-12 NKJV] 11 But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught [it], but [it came] through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The concept of a "steward" helps us further define what it means to be a "slave" in "voluntary service" to the Lord.

It is required of stewards that they be found faithful.

We are faithful when we are obedient to the Lord's will.

4 To Titus, a true son in [our] common faith: Grace, mercy, [and] peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.

Just like with Timothy, we see Paul affectionately refer to Titus as his son in the faith.

Like I mentioned during the introduction, Titus had come to faith in Jesus through Paul's preaching – he was disciple by Paul, he served in ministry with Paul.

Anytime Paul had anything difficult that needed to be done, guess who he sent – he sent Titus.

And notice Paul also extends grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's "grace" through the preaching of the Gospel was extending "mercy" towards the lost Cretans, and bringing them into the "peace" of reconciliation with God.

God's "grace" at work in Titus would encourage him to show "mercy" towards the Cretans and to pursue "peace" with them.

5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—

The word set in order is a medical term. It means to reset a broken bone – so here in verse 5, Paul is telling Titus that the reason that he was left in charge at Crete was to fix what was broken.

And one of the things that was broken was that the lack of leadership in Crete.

The groups around the island of Crete had no leadership to guide them – there was no leadership to bring them to spiritual maturity. There was no leadership to preach to them the correct doctrine.

So Paul provides a list of qualifications for Titus to use as a baseline in selecting these spiritual leaders.

I believe that qualifications list in the following verses means that God has specific qualifications for leaders in the church.

Leaders should not to be chosen at random, or just because they volunteer, or because they aspire to the position, or even because they are “natural leaders.”

Leaders should be chosen because they match the qualifications listed here.

It is ok if a man thinks he is “called.” Yet he must also be qualified.

- Going to seminary doesn’t make one qualified for spiritual leadership.
- Being a good talker doesn’t make one qualified for spiritual leadership.
- Natural or spiritual gifts in themselves do not qualify one for spiritual leadership.
- What one gives in money or volunteer time does not qualify them for spiritual leadership.
- What qualifies a man for spiritual leadership is godly character – and godly character established according to the clear criteria Paul gives.

So the first qualification -

6 if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.

He is to be blameless – this verse describes his home life.

What does it mean to be "blameless" at home?

The words that come next tell you!

He is to be "blameless" concerning his relationship with his wife, and concerning the raising of his children.

An elder must have an exemplary marriage – he must be a one-woman man , and be a good example in raising his children.

The principle is that a man's church will be a reflection of his home.

Regarding his children, they are to be brought up in the faith and are to be under control and obedient. Now – this doesn't mean that the children are perfect – I have read of many instances where the children of pastors rebel and go astray.

This simply means that the ministry begins at home –

Paul in his letter to Timothy writes -

[1Ti 3:4-5 NKJV] 4 one who rules his own house well, having [his] children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);

7 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, 8 but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled,

He is to be "blameless," which means "above being truly reproached," by the world at large.

I had you make a note of the words "must be" It's not just important that a bishop be blameless, it's NECESSARY because of whom he represents.

This is important since, as a "steward of God," he is a representation to the world of onlookers of what a Christian should be!

He is to differ from the world in the following important ways:

"not self-willed" – this means the candidate cannot be selfish or arrogant. An elder dies to himself to serve others.

"not quick-tempered" – Someone who is prone to anger - It speaks of a man who has a constant simmering anger and who nourishes his anger against others – close to the idea of a bitter man.

"not given to wine" - While this doesn't completely prohibit drinking alcohol, it establishes that the Elder is someone who desires to be filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

"not violent" – The individual cannot be contentious – there are people who simply like to argue and to fight.

"not greedy for money" - An Elder should have the proper biblical perspective on the use of this world's wealth as a means for promoting the Gospel.

"hospitable" - He is to be a lover of strangers, desiring to meet their needs.

"a lover of what is good" - In our culture we would apply this to his leisure and recreation activities. He should have "good," that is, proper, entertainments and personal pursuits - ones that are consistent with a relationship with Jesus Christ.

"sober-minded" - This means he disciplines his mind so as to control his thoughts, words, and behaviors.

"just" - Someone who is just shows no partiality. Someone who does what God tells him to do.

"holy" - He is set apart for God's service. His walk has to be different than the world's.

"self-controlled" - Another word for self-controlled is the word disciplined. He must be disciplined in his work.

This is a profile of what the world should see when it sees a leader in God's Church - a person who, by his office, is an example of what it means to be a Christian.

Thank God for the indwelling of His Holy Spirit to inspire these qualities!!

So now we are going to see qualities as they relate to the Word of God.

9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

The Elder is a student of God's Word - "he has been taught." This means that the leader has been under the teaching of someone else. A qualified leader doesn't

necessarily need to go to Bible College or Seminary, but they do need to be taught and disciplined by someone, not just themselves. IN the same way that Titus and Timothy were disciple by Paul.

He is steward of God's Word - "holding fast." This means also that the elder will stick to God's word, he must know his doctrine. He must be able to deal with every heretical teaching that will crop up.

This also means that he will teach from the word of God.

There are churches today where scripture is not even spoken – someone stands in front of the pulpit and gives a feel good message.

He is a servant of God's Word - "that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict."

A godly leader will use his solid foundation in God's word to exhort (encourage) those who are on the right track. He will also use it to convict (to discourage) those who are on the wrong track, those who contradict.

[2Ti 2:24-26 NKJV] 24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 and [that] they may come to their senses [and escape] the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to [do] his will.

So not only do we see the importance of character but also the importance of being in the Word of God.

These are the qualifications for the elders –

Church, this is what spiritual maturity looks like –

As we look through these qualifications, I am pretty sure that many of us see room for improvement –

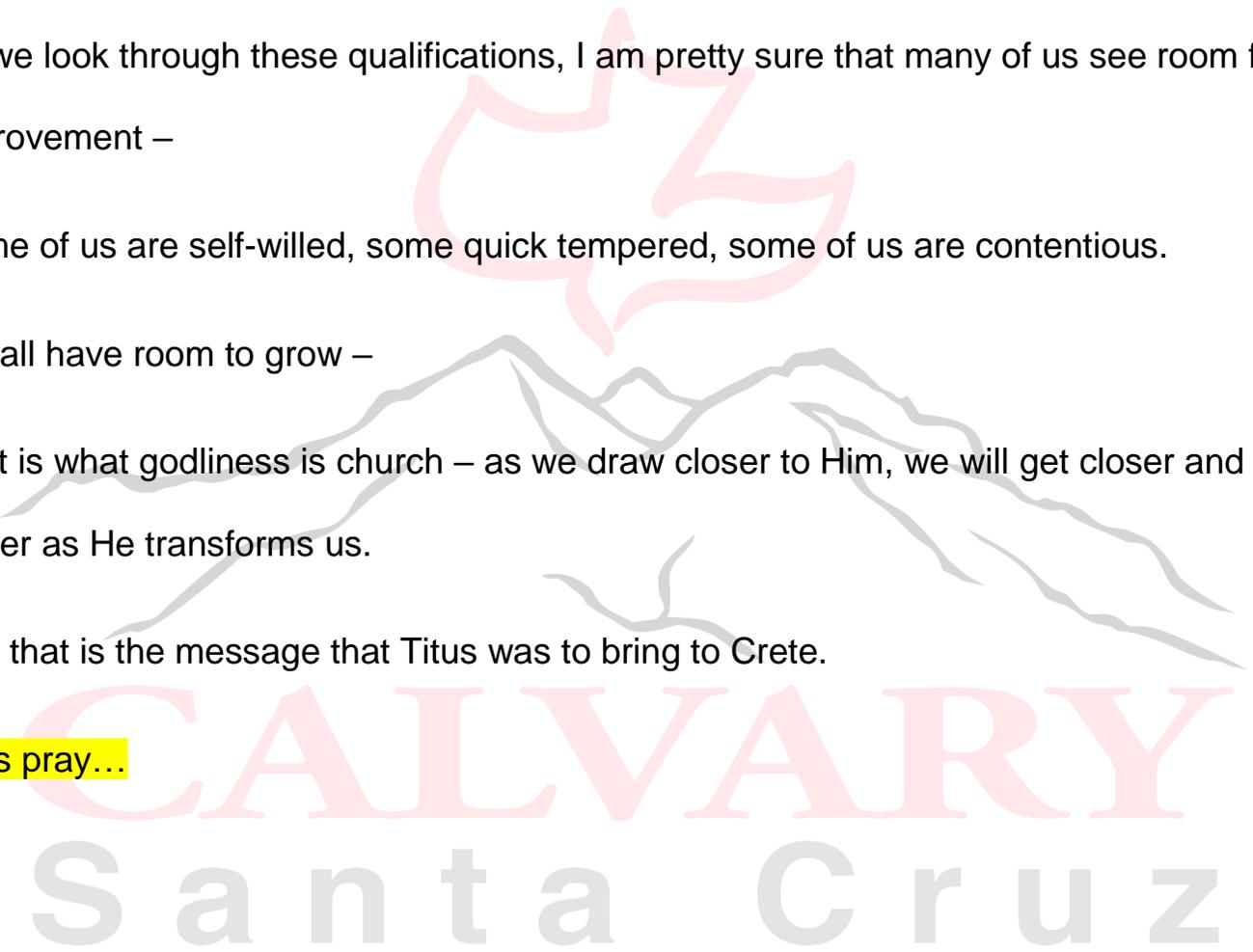
Some of us are self-willed, some quick tempered, some of us are contentious.

We all have room to grow –

That is what godliness is church – as we draw closer to Him, we will get closer and closer as He transforms us.

And that is the message that Titus was to bring to Crete.

Let's pray...



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