

Series: *Titus: The Gospel for Godly Living*
Lesson: *Our Mission Statement*
Text: Titus 1:1-4
Date: Sunday, November 6, 2011

Colonial Hills
ABFE
Baptist Church

Key



= Teacher Information



= Discussion Starter

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BACKGROUND

This section is taken from *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament* by Warren Wiersbe (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1997), pp. 656-57.

I. *The Man*

Titus was a Greek believer (Gal. 2:3), won to Christ through Paul's ministry (Titus 1:4). We know little about his background; he is not once mentioned in Acts. It is likely he was a convert from heathenism whom the apostle enlisted for service. He assisted in taking the offering for the saints (2 Cor. 2:1-9; 7:8-12; 12:18); and he met Paul at Troas with the report of the Corinthian situation (see 2 Cor. 2:12-13; 7:5-16). Titus carried 2 Corinthians back for Paul (2 Cor. 8:16-24). Titus was Paul's helper, left at Crete to organize the church (Titus 1:5) until Paul could send Tychicus or Artemas to take over (Titus 3:12). Titus was at Rome during Paul's second imprisonment, from whence he traveled to Dalmatia on a mission for the apostle (2 Tim. 4:10). Paul's estimate of Titus is given in 2 Cor. 8:23.

II. *The Letter*

Paul's haste in leaving Titus at Crete made it necessary for him to write to encourage and instruct this dedicated co-laborer. The Cretians were not the easiest people to work with, as Titus 1:12-13 points out. We do not know who started the church at Crete, but this much we know: the organization of the church and the lives of the members had both fallen into disrepute. It is likely that the church suffered from two sources: (1) visiting Judaizers who mixed law and grace, and (2) ignorant Christians who abused the grace of God and turned it into license. Paul had several purposes in mind when he wrote this letter: (1) to remind Titus of his work of organizing the church and appointing elders; (2) to warn him about false teachers; (3) to encourage him in pastoring the different kinds of people in the church; (4) to emphasize the true meaning of grace in the life of the Christian; (5) to explain how to deal with troublemakers in the church.

III. *The Emphasis*

Several words are repeated in this brief letter, helping us to understand the burden that was on Paul's heart. Notice that there is a major emphasis on good works (1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 5, 8, 14). Saved by grace means saved unto good works. Christian doctrine and Christian living are to be sound (1:9, 13; 2:1-2, 8). There ought to be a life of godliness (1:1; 2:12), not

worldliness. God's grace leads a person to live a godly life (1:4; 2:11ff; 3:7, 15). If you want a key verse for the book, it is probably 3:8: "those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works" (NKJV).

INTRODUCTION

Can you guess what companies the following mission statements belong to?

- Our mission is to "be our customers' favorite place and way to eat." – McDonalds
- Our mission is "to be the best financial services company in the world." – JP Morgan Chase & Co.
- Our mission is to "save people money so they can live better." – Walmart
- Our mission is "to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination." – Salvation Army
- Our mission is "to be the worldwide authority on kids, families and fun." – Toys 'R' Us
- Our mission is "to deliver family fun and create fond memories for all of our guests." – Six Flags
- Our mission is "to create richer, more satisfying lives through knowledge and entertainment." – Borders Books
- Our mission is "to be earth's most customer centric company; to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online." – Amazon.com

Any company worth its salt will have a carefully considered mission statement. According to wikipedia.com, "The mission statement should guide the actions of the organization, spell out its overall goal, provide a path, and guide decision-making. It provides 'the framework or context within which the company's strategies are formulated.'" While it may not be written out or even deliberately thought through, most individuals have a general mission statement that guides their actions, spells out their goals, provides a path, and guides decision-making. The apostle Paul was exemplary in this respect.

Throughout his epistles, one regularly discovers summary statements of what drove him, and none perhaps is more specific than the mission statement he delineates in Titus 1:1-4. Paul's mission statement here contains two parts.

WHO PAUL WAS: Our Position (v. 1)

First century Roman letter-writing listed the writer's name at the outset, rather than at the end (as in modern American letter writing). So, Paul attributes the letter to himself and then uses two phrases to describe himself. These phrases serve both to underline his God-given authority and to instruct his audience concerning their position.

1. *We are slaves of God.*

Paul first states that he is "a servant of God" (cf. Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Galatians 1:10; Acts 16:17). However, the Greek word here is not the one typically translated "servant" (*diakonos*, from which we get "deacon"); rather, the Greek word is *doulos* ("slave"¹). The most literal translation would be "'bondservant'...in that it often indicates one who sells himself into slavery to another."² That translation is not so readily understood today, so the best rendering would simply be "slave" referring to "one who gives himself up wholly to another's will."³ This phrase finds its roots in the Old Testament in which many famous personalities were accurately labeled with this phrase "servant [or slave] of the Lord"—Abraham (Psalm 104[105]:42), Moses (Joshua 14:7), Joshua (Joshua 24:30[29]; Judges 2:8), David (Psalm 89:3; cf. II Samuel 7:5, 8), and Elijah (II Kings 10:10).⁴ This word is also used in the Septuagint to describe every believers' relationship to God (cf., Psalm 19:11, 13; 67[66]:17; 86[85]:2, 4, 16; 119[118]:17, 23, 38, 49, 65, 76, 84, 122, 124f, 135, 140, 176).⁵

Paul is acknowledging that his ministerial role before God is one of a slave. He doesn't simply serve God or work for God in some contracted and limited role, still maintaining his independent freedom. Rather, this word "implies Paul's acknowledged ownership by God and complete dependence upon Him."⁶ It reminds him that his relationship with God is one of "subordinate, obligatory, and responsible" service.⁷ Likewise, every believer shares this subservient position, for "he who was called [to salvation] while free is Christ's slave" (I Corinthians 7:22 NASB; cf. Ephesians 6:6; I Peter 2:16; Revelation 7:3).

2. *We are sent-ones of Christ.*

To underline the God-given authority of his message to Titus and through him to the churches on Crete, Paul addresses himself secondly as "an apostle of Jesus Christ." This is typical of Paul's greetings and refers to his official apostolic office (as indicated by the phrase, "of Jesus Christ"), a role enjoyed only by him and the Twelve due to their specific and personal selection by Jesus Himself. This official office ended with those men.

¹ For literal uses of this word, see I Corinthians 7:21, 22; Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:11, 22; 4:1; I Timothy 6:1; Titus 2:9; Philemon 16, 18.

² NET notes, v. 1.

³ Kent Jr., Homer A. *The Pastoral Epistles*, Revised Ed. Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1986. P. 209.

⁴ In the New Testament, this word is also used specifically to describe Epaphras (Colossians 4:12), Tychicus (Colossians 4:7), and James (James 1:1). Cf. II Timothy 2:24.

⁵ Knight, George W. *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1992. P. 282.

⁶ Hiebert, D. Edmond. "Titus" in *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, Vol. 11. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981. P. 426.

⁷ Knight, p. 282.

However, the word foundationally refers to a “sent one,” and its idea is expressed in English with words like “messenger,” “envoy,” “spokesperson,” “delegate,” or “ambassador.” Indeed, this is how that word is used in several New Testament passages (cf. John 13:16; Philippians 2:25; II Corinthians 8:23). In this sense, then, all believers share this commissioning, for II Corinthians 5:20 assigns us all the responsibility of “ambassadors for Christ.” It is this phrase that highlights the personal nature of our slavery, for God has “sent” us to serve, not simply in the shadows of impersonal and secondary ministry, but in the primary focus of helping people. We have been commissioned and authorized by Christ to minister to people.



Discuss the error of those who minister only in secondary and impersonal ministry (e.g., cleaning, maintenance, etc.)—we honor them sometimes as unsung heroes, even though they may not be fully obedient to God’s idea of ministry. Why is this kind of ministry not “enough”? Because of our position as “sent ones” to minister to people; because of the personal nature of the Great Commission; because the heart of God is all about people.

Application: Paul was always driven by the reality of who he had become in Christ. His understanding of the grace of God (I Corinthians 3:10; 15:10; Ephesians 3:7) and of his own unworthiness (I Corinthians 15:9; Ephesians 3:8; I Timothy 1:15) helped him easily claim the responsibility of “commissioned slavery.” How much of a bearing on your daily mindset and pursuits does your position have? What drives your work ethic? What motivates you in the business and ugliness of the work place? What compels your relationships with people? What influences the way you plan for tomorrow and dream about the future? What summarizes your goals for this year? Does the awareness that you are God’s slave and Christ’s ambassador influence your thinking and regulate your interactions and plans?



How would a greater and more regular awareness of this two-fold position change our daily focus and practice?

Transition: When Paul began to write to Titus and through him to the churches of Crete, he first shared who he was, and by that he instructs us about our position. As he continues his greeting, Paul moves on to explain why he wrote, and now he informs us concerning our mission.

Beginning in the middle of verse 1 through the end of verse 3, Paul explains specifically why he was writing to Titus and generally why he ministered at all. While his regular awareness of his position before God drove him to minister, these verses explain what he hoped to accomplish in his ministry. These verses really provide a mission statement from Paul. Translating from the original language these verses could be rendered:

[I am ministering] for the purpose of the faith of God’s chosen ones and the true knowledge of the truth which is for godliness, on the basis of the hope of eternal life, which the unlying God promised before eternal ages, but in His own time He revealed His message in proclamation, which was entrusted to me according to the command of God our Savior.

These verses suggest a five-fold purpose of Paul in his “commissioned slavery.”

1. We should be establishing people in faith.

Paul’s mission statement starts off with a little Greek preposition (*kata*) that is most frequently translated “according to.” It often, however, refers to purpose or intent and can be translated “for,” and that seems to be the best interpretation here.⁸ In other words, Paul is stressing that a goal of his ministry is “for” the faith or to encourage the faith of God’s elect⁹ (cf. Romans 1:5). This most likely refers to the “subjective element of trust or belief,” rather than to the body of truth held commonly among all believers (“the faith,” v. 4; cf. Jude 3).¹⁰ So, Paul’s ministerial pursuit was to cultivate within people faith in God. He wanted to establish within them a confident trust in God—both a saving faith among those who were unbelieving and a steadfast and active faith among God’s chosen ones.



Why is faith so important? Consider faith both in its power to save and to transform us into Christ’s image—ie., without it, we won’t understand God or obey God (“the righteous one will live by faith,” Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; cf. II Cor. 5:7; Gal. 2:20).

⁸ Cf. Translations: NASB, ESV, NIV, RSV, NET, NLT, HCSB, GNB. Resources: BDAG, NAC, NIGTC, EBC, HNTC, JFB, *Opening Up Titus*, Erdman, MacArthur.

⁹ While Paul refers to the wonderful (and somewhat mysterious) truth of election, he does so in passing, simply to refer to believers, not to make a point or teach a doctrine. Therefore, it would be wise to avoid any discussion here about election. This beautiful and special truth is a biblical doctrine, but it has fallen into disfavor with some and abuse by others. For a good brief explanation of it, please see Lea, Thomas D. and Hayne P. Griffin. 1, 2 *Timothy, Titus*, Vol. 34, electronic ed., Logos Library System. *The New American Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001. P. 264-66.

¹⁰ Knight, p. 283.

Transition: Such an internal, subjective faith is built upon an objective reality (i.e., “the faith”), and so a natural second goal that Paul had in his mission statement was to grow people through the truth.

2. *We should be growing people in truth.*

Saving faith is based upon truth (i.e., the Gospel message), and ongoing faith is grounded upon the same realities. Therefore, Paul wanted to further, not only people’s faith, but also their knowledge¹¹ of the truth. These concepts are twins that cannot be separated. On the one hand, where Scriptural truth about God and His work are taught, faith will be enflamed. When you see someone rich in faith, you will also discover an individual grounded in truth. On the other hand, minimize truth and cloud reality, and you will effectively undermine faith and engender a weak commitment to the Lord.

Application: If the “righteous ones live by faith” (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; cf. II Corinthians 5:7; Galatians 2:20), it is incumbent upon God’s slaves to teach faith-cultivating truth. If we desire a church that is strong in faith—walking by faith and not by sight—then we need to clearly see reality as the truth of Scripture reveals it. If we want our children to be firm in their beliefs and committed to Christ, then we must give them reason to be so by teaching them the unchanging truths of God’s character and purposes. If we want our students to waver not in their trust in God even during difficulties, then we must persuade them with the reality of God and His care for His people both as clearly taught in God’s Word and as regularly experienced in our own daily lives.



Where are other areas within the church or in our daily lives where this immersion in truth becomes vital for our perseverance in faith? What are some “core” truths that are especially important for “sound faith” (Titus 1:13; 2:2)?

3. *We should be directing people toward godliness.*

The preposition *kata* is again used here (i.e., “truth which is after [*kata*] godliness”) with the same implication of purpose. So, while knowing truth

¹¹ The word for knowledge here seems to emphasize an experiential component to it. It’s more than just an academic and mental understanding of God’s truth in His Word; it looks for and understands the outplay of that truth in one’s daily life.

should generate faith among God’s people, it should also produce godliness within those people (cf. I Timothy 6:3). Jesus understood this power of truth when He prayed in John 17:17, “Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth.” Truth, then, not only affects the heart and mind and stirs up confidence in God; it also affects the life and promotes a God-centeredness in one’s choices, desires, pursuits, interactions, and activities.¹² One cannot help but know God’s character and purposes in Scripture without having that knowledge affect the way he relates to God. And this godliness is the root of all practical righteousness, for one who is centered on God in his daily orientation will be directed to please God in his daily living.¹³ And so, contrary to a contemporary line of thought, truth and godliness are not mutually exclusive; rather, they are cousins that dwell together in perfect unity. This becomes a dominant theme of Paul’s short epistle to Titus.



Consider briefly discussing how Paul uses truth as the basis for specific godliness in 2:1-10 and 3:1-8.

Transition: So far, Paul’s mission statement seems quite academic: at the core of his ministry is truth, which will produce both faith and godliness.¹⁴ Personal experience, however, seems to question such a progression, for, on the one hand, we can sometimes suppress the truth (Romans 1:18), and on the other hand, the difficulties of life can cause us to doubt Scriptural truth and its depiction of reality. With those possibilities in mind, Paul presents the next aspect of his mission statement.

4. *We should be motivating people with hope.*

Biblical hope shatters the shallow “wishful thinking” of the contemporary idea of hope. A believer’s hope is a confident expectation that something God promised will happen. It is faith applied (cf. Hebrews 1:1; I Peter 1:3),

¹² “The disciplined study of the knowledge of the truth is necessary to convince our minds and hearts of our fallen human condition, of God’s higher purposes and plans for us, and, therefore, our desperate need to change. This understanding, empowered by the Spirit of God, will transform us from self-centered and self-controlled to God-centered and God-controlled” (Lea, p. 267).

¹³ “Because only truth is consistent with life and reality, there is always some point at which all other approaches to life and spirituality fail. When Christians fail or life appears contradictory to biblical revelation, it is because we have departed from the truth either in belief or practice. God’s truth, Paul declared, leads to godliness—to a different and complete manner of life” (Larson, Knute. *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Vol. 9. *Holman New Testament Commentary*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000. P. 341).

¹⁴ “The correlation of these terms characterizes the purpose of Paul’s apostleship and highlights the perspective of his message and ministry. He constantly calls on his readers to turn to God in faith and to live in faith and is equally emphatic that God has previously chosen or elected such people (e.g., Romans 8:28–33; 9:11). Similarly he constantly calls on them to know and understand God’s truth so that they can ‘walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects’ (e.g., Colossians 1:9–10). Here he knits all these aspects together with carefully chosen words (cf. 2:10–11; 3:8)” (Knight, p. 283).

for it both claims the promises of God and applies them to one's daily life, so that today's choices, pursuits, and activities are done in light of that reality.

In verse 2, the particular hopeful promise that Paul has in mind is "eternal life." This is another big theme in this short book (cf. 2:13-14; 3:7). Eternal life is a present reality possessed by all believers, but it also has aspects that are yet unrealized. One writer explains, "Life, in its New Testament sense, is a very rich concept indeed. It gathers into one all of the blessings of salvation. All that is ours in Jesus Christ as saved sinners can be summed up in the one glorious word: *life*. At present we do not have this life in its fullest form. There is more to be experienced of it in the future—much more. Paul refers to this when he speaks about the 'hope of eternal life'"¹⁵—life, not just eternal in length, but eternal in quality.¹⁶

This concept is tied to the first three (i.e., establishment in faith, growth in truth, and direction in godliness) with another Greek preposition (*epi*), which can be translated to express the idea of basis (cf. EBC, NAC, HNTC, JFB, Erdman)—"a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life" (NIV). So, the framework in which Paul wants to establish peoples' faith and godliness through truth is the hope of God's gospel-promise of eternal life. This is the basis upon which his ministry rests. This is the motivation through which his "commissioned slavery" is energized. And this is the stimulation that will encourage truth-filled faith and godliness in those to whom he ministers. When we are tempted to suppress truth, the hope of what God is doing as promised in the gospel message will strengthen us to persevere in obedience. When unbelief challenges our commitment to Christ, hopefully claiming the gospel-promises of God will motivate us to bank on God.

In verses 2-3, Paul suggests two reasons for the motivational power of this gospel-hope. First, such hope is a never-ending source of energy because of the never-failing nature of the Promise-Maker. The "God who cannot lie" made this promise of eternal life. And it's not that He won't lie; it's that He cannot lie (contra the Cretans, cf. 1:12). His "nature is the absence of falsehood (*apseudes* [in the Greek])."¹⁷ Second, eternal life was determined "before the world began" (lit. "before eternal ages"), but "in due times" (lit. "in His own time") it has been revealed in gospel-preaching (lit. "His word through preaching"). This promise was planned long ago, and in this present time, God has not forgotten. No matter what our circumstances may communicate, no matter what the newspapers may say, no matter how critical or depressing the fellowship may be—God is being faithful to His gospel-promises which climax in the hope of eternal life!

¹⁵ Campbell, David. *Opening Up Titus*. Leominster: Day One Publications, 2007. P. 18.

¹⁶ Hiebert, p. 427.

¹⁷ Kent, p. 210.

Application: This was a bedrock of Paul's ministry. Truth may be spurned, faith may be undermined, godliness may be rejected; but God's promises never fail! So, while Paul understood the fundamental necessity of truth (for faith and godliness), he always made sure he taught it within the overarching framework of God's promises in the gospel. It was the hope of eternal life that made the truth real, that made faith compelling, and that made godliness attractive. Our service must have this same flavor.



Consider sharing specific testimonies of how a hope-filled reminder of God's character or purposes motivated the receiving of truth for the establishing of faith and godliness.

Transition: Having laid down the meat of his mission statement, Paul now reveals where it all starts or how he actually begins to accomplish these goals.

5. ***We should be proclaiming to people God's message.***

Paul explains that today's manifestation of God's hope-filled gospel-promises is in the proclamation of His Word. The (a) "eternal life" which was (b) promised in (c) eternity past is (a1) "His Word" which is (b1) preached in (c1) His own time. So, the way in which God is conveying to the world the hope of His covenant promises is through the proclamation of God's gospel-message in the Word. "In the fullness of time" God had sent for His Son to accomplish salvation, and now "in due times" God has ordained preaching as the means of revealing salvation (cf. Romans 10:13-17).

In the second half of verse 3, Paul basks in the sobering awareness that this responsibility had been entrusted to him. He uses an emphatic personal pronoun, as if in awe that he ("Yes, me!") had been selected for this divine program. Indeed, He had been entrusted and commanded by "God our Savior," and this Savior would have Himself be known, believed, and obeyed through the preaching of His message.

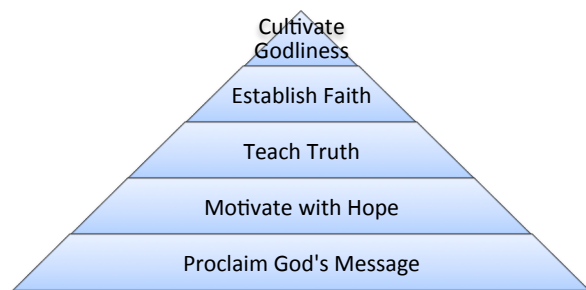
Application: For preachers, the application of this point is evident. Paul knew it in I Corinthians 9:16, "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel." We must be faithful proclaimers of God's message in which is the hope of the world, the knowledge of truth, and the enablement of saving and life-changing faith. For non-preachers, the application should also be evident. The proclamation of God's Word is important! You should be exposing yourself to good preaching that faithfully proclaims the hopeful truths of the multifaceted message of God. You should be compelling others to be exposed to that kind of preaching. You should yourself be proclaiming God's Word to others, for the betterment of their faith and godliness—to those you are evangelizing and to those you are discipling. It is the

proclamation of God’s Word that was the starting point of Paul’s mission statement, and God’s Word must be the foundation of ours, as well.

So, we summarize Paul’s mission statement:

Since I am God’s slave and Christ’s sent-one, I will faithfully and humbly proclaim God’s message so that people are motivated by hope to know God’s truth which will establish them in faith and cultivate a life of godliness.

The following chart may also help us understand what was driving Paul in his ministry, particularly as he begins to write this letter to Titus and the Cretian churches.



CONCLUSION

In verse 4, Paul simply concludes his greeting by addressing his letter to Titus and blessing him. This verse demonstrates that Paul’s mission statement was more than just a standard on paper; it really was his daily commitment. It was that mission statement that compelled him to write this letter to Titus—a young man that he himself had won to Christ¹⁸ in fulfillment of his mission statement. And it was that mission statement that regularly left him burdened for his recipients to know the grace and peace that come through a relationship with “God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior” (cf. II Peter 1:2-4).

How will you put this mission statement into practice?

¹⁸ “Mine own son after the common faith” (v. 4). “Own son” actually translates the Greek word for genuine or legitimate, referring to a child born within wedlock. Used here, it suggests that Titus’ was true to his spiritual heritage and had indeed been born again legitimately. “After the common faith” further underlines Titus’ sharing through that birth in the common faith held by all believers. This description of Titus served to further highlight his authority and ability to the Cretian churches among whom he was now ministering.