

Dr. Robert Yarbrough, Pastoral Epistles, Session 12,

Titus Introduction and Titus 1 - The Pastoral Epistles:

Apostolic Instruction for Pastoral Leaders and Their Followers

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All right, let's jump into this deep dive. We're tackling the book of Titus today, a book that, you know, a lot of people think is just all about church leadership and practical advice, but did you realize it starts with this little mini theology lesson that kind of blows that whole idea out of the water? Yeah, yeah, no, it's true. We're talking God's kindness and mercy.

Right there in the beginning. The hope of eternal life. It's all there in the opening verses.

Oh, yeah, absolutely. Titus 1.2 to 4. Yeah. It's like the foundation for everything that comes later in the book.

It's amazing. Yeah. Okay, so let's unpack this.

Okay. We're dealing with one of the pastoral epistles here, a letter from Paul to his close companion Titus, and, you know, there's debate about whether Paul actually wrote all of these letters. There's some discussion about that.

But for our deep dive today, we're going with the traditional view that he did. We're going with the traditional view. Okay.

So the purpose of this letter is to help Titus navigate the challenges of establishing and leading the church on the island of Crete. On the island of Crete. Okay.

Yeah. Now, Crete wasn't just some like random island vacation spot, right? Oh, no. Put yourself in Titus's shoes for a minute.

You're on this island that's steeped in myth and legend. Absolutely. You think King Minos, the Minotaur, the whole labyrinth thing.

Yeah. It's fascinating. It's really fascinating.

That mythical complexity kind of mirrors the real-life complexity Titus faced. Exactly. But now, instead of facing a mythical labyrinth, you're facing a real-life labyrinth of Jewish communities, Roman influence, and this fledgling Christian community trying to find its footing.

Trying to figure it all out. Talk about pressure. Yeah.

First-century Crete was kind of a melting pot of cultures and beliefs. It was part of the Roman Empire, had large Jewish communities, and was strategically located right there in the Mediterranean Sea. Okay.

So we've got the setting. Right. Now, let's talk about the key players: Paul, the seasoned leader, and Titus, his trusted companion.

Yeah, that's right. So Paul, as you probably know, was a major figure in the early church. Oh, yeah.

Absolutely. And he started out persecuting Christians. Oh, yeah, he did.

Then he had that dramatic conversion experience. The road to Damascus. Right.

Yeah. And became this tireless traveler and writer, spreading the message of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. Uh-huh.

Now, Titus, unlike Paul, was a Gentile. Right. And that little detail is actually huge, given the context of the book and what was going on in the early church.

Absolutely. Remember that whole debate about whether Gentile converts needed to follow Jewish law? Big debate. Yeah.

That was a- that was a big one. Absolutely. And that's where things get really interesting with Titus.

Okay. So tell me more about that. Well, you remember that incident Paul describes in Galatians? Oh, yeah.

Where he refused to have Titus circumcised? Yeah. Even though some Jewish Christians insisted it was necessary for salvation. Oh, man.

That must have taken some serious guts. It does. It does.

It really shows how strongly Paul believed that salvation comes through faith in Jesus, not through following the Jewish law. You know? So when Paul sends Titus to Crete, this Gentile leader to this mixed community, it's not just some random assignment. No.

He's making a statement. He's making a statement. Absolutely.

And that's where the theological foundation that Paul lays out in those opening verses of Titus becomes even more significant. Right. He's grounding the church.

In Crete. In the core message of the gospel. God's grace and mercy and the promise of eternal life.

It's like he's saying, this is what we believe. This is what unites us. Yeah.

Even amidst our differences. The foundation. Yeah.

Yeah. So we've got this incredible backdrop: a complex island, a diverse community. A diverse community.

And this tension between Jewish and Gentile Christians. And this tension. And in the middle of it all, Paul sends Titus with this letter.

With this letter. That is both deeply theological and intensely practical. Yeah.

And one of the key themes that emerges from this letter is this idea of order. Order. Okay.

Yeah. Paul knew that for the church to thrive, it needed structure and leadership. Right.

So he instructs Titus to appoint elders. Ah, yes. The famous qualifications for leadership.

And there's that word that always throws me off. Blameless. Yes.

It sounds like Paul is setting an impossibly high standard. It does sound kind of daunting, doesn't it? It does. It really does.

But I think what's interesting here is that Paul isn't talking about perfection. Oh, okay. He's not saying these leaders have to be sinless robots.

Right. So what does he mean by blameless then? What's the deeper meaning there? Well, I think it's more about striving to align your actions with what you believe. Okay.

It's about letting that transforming power of the gospel really impact your everyday life. So blameless is less about never messing up. I think so.

And more about the ongoing process of becoming more Christ-like. It's a journey, not a destination. Okay.

That makes sense. Yeah. So for those of us who aren't aiming for eldership, does this blameless idea still apply? Oh, I think so.

Yeah. Okay. Absolutely.

So we've got this emphasis on order and leadership, but Paul doesn't stop there. He also dives into another key theme, sound doctrine. That's right.

So what's he getting at with that? Yeah. So for Paul, sound doctrine wasn't just about having the right theological ideas. It was about making sure those ideas really translated into a transformed life.

So it's not believe whatever you want as long as you're a good person. Right. Exactly.

It's more like what you believe should fundamentally change how you live. That's exactly right. Paul saw good works as that natural outflow of a heart that's been transformed by God's grace.

Okay. He's not talking about earning your salvation, but rather living out the implications of that salvation in a very real and tangible way. Okay.

So where do these good works come into play in Titus? Well, that's a great question. And it's something we're going to dive into in our next section. All right.

Well, I can't wait to dig into that. Yeah, me too. So we'll be right back after a quick break.

Okay. So anyway, in chapter two, Paul gets really specific about how different groups within the church should live. So he addresses older men, older women, younger men, younger women, and even slaves, providing instructions on how their faith should shape their actions.

Okay. So it's like he's creating a blueprint for a truly transformed community. Exactly.

Yeah. That's a great way to put it. Okay.

So let's start with the older men. Okay. What kind of example does Paul want them to set? Well, he calls them to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, love, and perseverance.

Wow. That's a pretty high bar. It is a pretty high bar.

It makes me think of those mentors we've all had, you know? Right. The ones that just radiate wisdom and stability and kindness, the kind of people you just instinctively trust. Yeah.

Absolutely. Yeah. It's like they're not just dispensing advice.

They're embodying a life that's been transformed by the gospel. Yeah. Okay.

That makes sense. Yeah. So what about the older women? Yeah.

So for the older women... What role does Paul see them playing? He calls them to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. I love that. Yeah.

Okay. And then he specifically mentions that they should train the younger women. It's not just about avoiding bad habits.

It's about actively mentoring the next generation. Passing on wisdom, sharing experiences. Yeah.

Showing them what a life of faith looks like. Yeah. Yeah.

And it's beautiful, isn't it? It really is. Because it really challenges some of the cultural norms of the time. Right.

You know, older women often had limited roles. Yeah. But Paul here is affirming their value.

Yeah. And giving them this vital role in shaping the future of the church. I love that.

It's really cool. Okay. So we've covered the older generation.

What about those younger men? Yeah. What advice does Paul offer them? So for the younger men, he keeps it pretty simple. Okay.

He just says, likewise, encourage the younger men to be self-controlled. That's it. Yeah.

Just self-controlled. Yeah. It seems a bit vague compared to all the details- I know.

... he gave about the older folks. I know. It might seem that way at first.

Yeah. But remember, this is a letter. Okay.

Not like a comprehensive theological treatise. Right. So Paul is assuming that Titus understands the broader context- ... of what he means by self-control.

So what's the broader context here? Well, in the ancient world, self-control was a big deal. Okay. Especially for young men.

Uh-huh. It encompassed everything- Okay. ... from sexual purity to managing your temper- Okay.

... avoiding excessive drinking- Right. ... and just generally making wise choices. It's like the foundation- Yeah.

Yeah. Exactly. ... for a strong character, for becoming- Yeah.

... a reliable and trustworthy person. Yeah. Absolutely.

Okay. That makes a lot more sense. Okay.

All right. Now for the million-dollar question. Okay.

What about those younger women? Yeah. Paul's instructions for them can be a bit controversial. Yes.

Yes, they can. Especially from our modern perspective. Absolutely.

And it's important, I think- yeah... to approach this passage- okay... with sensitivity and historical understanding.

Yeah. So Paul tells them to be self-controlled and pure. Okay.

To be busy at home- Okay. ... to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands- Mm-hmm. ... so that no one will malign the word of God.

Okay. There's a lot to unpack there. There is.

Yeah. So self-controlled and pure makes sense- yeah... in light of what we just discussed- right.

... about the younger men. Right. Yeah.

But busy at home- Yeah. ... doesn't that feel a bit restrictive? Well, it's tempting to read that phrase- Yeah. ... through our 21st-century lens, right? Okay.

But remember, the home played a very different role- Okay. ... in the first century. Okay.

So it's not necessarily about confining women to domestic duties- right... but recognizing- yeah... the vital role- absolutely.

... they played in shaping the household. Yeah. And by extension, the community.

The community, exactly. And keep in mind- ... that many women also ran businesses from their homes. Okay.

So it wasn't just about cooking and cleaning. Right. Paul is affirming the importance of their work- okay.

... but he's also challenging them to do it- Okay. ... with grace, kindness, and purity of heart. Okay.

That makes a lot more sense. And I appreciate that he emphasizes kindness and submission- right. ... so that no one will malign the word of God.

Right. It's like he's saying- that's all connected... that your actions, even in the privacy of your home, can impact how people perceive the Christian faith.

That's a great way to put it. Yeah. Okay.

So we've talked about the older men- Wow. ... the older women, the younger men- Yeah. ... the younger women.

Mm-hmm. Now this brings us to the most challenging group- Mm-hmm. Paul addresses- This is a tough one.

... the slaves. Yeah. This is where things get- this is where things get really tricky.

Really tricky. How does Paul- ... who preaches a gospel of freedom and equality- Yeah.

... address the issue of slavery? Right. A system that so blatantly violates those principles. It's a passage that has generated- yeah.

... a lot of debate- for sure. ... and interpretation. Yeah.

So Paul instructs slaves to be subject to their masters in everything to try to please them- ... not to talk back to them- Okay. ... not to steal from them- Okay. ... but to show that they can be fully trusted- Mm-hmm.

... so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our savior attractive. It sounds like- Yeah. ... on the surface at least- ... it sounds like he's simply reinforcing the status quo- Right.

... urging submission- Yeah. ... to a system that we now recognize as inherently unjust. Right.

How do we reconcile this- Yeah. ... with the rest of Paul's message? That's the question, isn't it? Yeah. And I think it's crucial to remember- Yeah.

... that Paul is writing within a specific historical and cultural context. Okay. So he's not addressing slavery- ... as a political or social institution- right.

... he's addressing individuals- Okay. ... who are trapped within that system. So is he just being pragmatic? Well- is he just giving them advice on how to survive? I think that's part of it.

Okay. But I think there's also a deeper layer here. Okay.

Remember, Paul is always pointing to the bigger picture. Uh-huh. He's pointing to the transforming power of the gospel.

Right. So he's urging these slaves- okay... to live out their faith.

Okay. Even in the midst of this injustice. So he's not condoning slavery- right.

... but he's showing them. He's showing them how to live. How to live with integrity.

With integrity, hope, and even joy- and joy... in the face of it. Wow.

Yeah. And notice how he connects their actions- yeah... back to the reputation of the gospel.

Uh-huh. He says they should live in such a way- Yeah. ... that they make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.

It's about demonstrating- Yeah. ... the power of Christ- Yeah. ... to transform even the most difficult situations.

Even the most difficult situations, exactly. And it's important to remember that even though Paul doesn't explicitly condemn slavery in Titus- right... his words plant the seeds for its eventual dismantling.

I think so, yeah. He emphasizes the spiritual equality- Yes. ... of all believers- Yes.

... regardless of their social status. Absolutely. Which undermines the very foundation- right.

... of a system that dehumanizes people based on their position in society. Absolutely, yeah. He's laying the groundwork.

So while Paul doesn't offer a direct critique- yeah. ... of the institution of slavery- yeah. ... his message of love, grace, and equality- right.

... creates a framework that ultimately leads to its demise. I think that's a great way to put it. Okay, we've covered a lot of ground here.

We have. Older men, older women. Yeah.

Younger men, younger women, slaves. That's right. Paul has provided specific guidance- like that.

... for each group- for each group... showing how the gospel should be lived out... in the practical realities of their lives. And remember- yeah.

... all of this is rooted in those opening verses. Right. Let's talk about that.

Yeah. The foundation for all of these good works- ... is God's grace and mercy freely given to us through Christ.

Yeah. So it's not about following a set of rules to earn God's favor. Right.

It's about responding to his love and grace- yeah... by striving to live a life- yes... that reflects his character.

That reflects his character. Exactly. But it's one thing to talk about good works in general terms.

Right. Where does Paul get really concrete about what this looks like in everyday life? That's a great question. That's where Titus chapter three comes in.

Okay. It's like the grand finale. Right, yeah.

Where Paul brings everything together- Okay. ... and shows how all these seemingly disparate pieces- Yeah. ... the theology, the leadership instructions, the advice for different groups- Yeah.

... they all connect to this idea of living out the gospel through good works. So it's like he's saying, okay, this is why all of this matters. This is why it matters.

Exactly. Yeah, right. And he starts by reminding us- yeah.

... where we came from. Okay. And he doesn't sugarcoat it.

Yeah. He says we were once foolish, disobedient- ... deceived, and enslaved- right.

... by all kinds of passions and pleasures. He's not pulling any punches. He's not, no.

But that makes the contrast even more powerful. Absolutely. Right.

Yeah. So he goes on to say- Okay... but when the kindness and love of God, our savior, appeared- Mm-hmm.

... he saved us. Yeah. Not because of the righteous things we had done- Right.

... but because of his mercy. It's pure grace. It is pure grace.

It's not something we earned- no... or deserve. Not at all.

It's that radical life-altering grace- yes... that changes everything. It changes everything.

And that grace- Yeah. ... should motivate us to live differently. Oh, okay.

He talks about being saved- Yeah. ... through the washing of rebirth- Mm-hmm. ... and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

Right. And then he says, so that having been justified by his grace- Okay. ... we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

So it's not just about escaping hell- right... and going to heaven someday? Yeah. It's about experiencing- it's about experiencing that transformation here and now.

The transformation here and now, that impacts- yeah... how we live every single day. Okay, so that's where the good works come in.

That's where the good works come in. Yeah. Paul says, "This is a trustworthy saying- Oh.

... and I want you to stress these things- Okay. ... so that those who have trusted in God- Mm-hmm. ... may be careful to devote themselves- Yeah.

... to doing what is good. It's like a mic drop moment. It is.

He's saying, listen up, this is important. This is important. It's not a suggestion.

Yeah. It's a call to action. Right.

And notice what he emphasizes as good. Yes, yeah. He specifically mentions things like being peaceable- us! ... gentle, showing every consideration to everyone.

Yeah, it's about- it's about how we treat others. How we treat others, exactly. Especially those outside the church.

Especially those outside the church. And remember- yeah. ... Titus is dealing with this very diverse community in Crete.

Right. You've got Jewish Christians- Yeah. ... Gentile Christians- Yeah.

... maybe even some people who are still exploring the faith. Exploring the faith, all right. And Paul's urging them to be a community- right.

... that reflects the loving grace of Christ. Even in the midst of their differences. Even in the midst of their differences, which is- which is such a timely message for us today.

Oh, it is, isn't it? Think about the people you interact with every day. Yeah. Are you approaching them- right.

... with gentleness and consideration- right. ... even when you disagree with them? It's tough. Are you willing to be a peacemaker- Right.

... in a world that's so polarized? Yeah, those are tough questions. They are tough questions. But I think Titus really reminds us- Yeah.

... that this is what it means. This is what it means. To live out the gospel- yeah.

... in a very practical way. Okay, so Paul doesn't stop there. He doesn't, no.

He warns against getting caught up- right... in pointless arguments and controversies. Exactly.

He specifically mentions foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law. It's not about avoiding tough conversations altogether. Right.

But it's about focusing on what truly matters. Focusing on what truly matters. Good.

Yeah. He connects this- okay... directly to our identity.

... as those who have been saved by grace. Right. He says, remind the people- Mm-hmm.

... to be subject to rulers and authorities- Okay. ... to be obedient- Okay. ... to be ready to do whatever is good- Yeah.

... to slander no one- Okay. ... to be peaceable and considerate- Yeah. ... and always to be gentle.

It's like he's saying your good works. Yeah. Aren't just these random acts of kindness.

Right. They flow from your transformed heart. They do.

From the reality of who you are in Christ. That's a beautiful way to put it. And it's a powerful reminder- yeah.

... that the gospel isn't just about private beliefs. Yeah. It's not just about what you believe in your head.

Right. It has public implications. Yeah.

It changes how we live. How we treat others. How we engage with the world around us.

Absolutely. As we've been going through this deep dive into Titus- yeah... I've been struck.

... by how much it challenges us to think differently- Me too. ... about what it means to be a Christian. It really does.

It's not just about believing the right things. Right. It's about letting those beliefs transform.

It's about letting those beliefs transform our actions. Our actions and relationships. And relationships.

Exactly. It's about demonstrating the power of Christ- yeah... to bring hope and healing- yeah.

... and transformation- yes. ... to a world that desperately needs it. To a world that so desperately needs it.

Yeah. As we wrap up our deep dive into the book of Titus- Okay. ... I want to leave you with this question.

Okay. How is the grace of God, that unearned, undeserved gift of love and mercy, motivating you- right... to devote yourself to doing what is good? That's a great question.

It's a question worth pondering. It is. I think the book of Titus, despite its brevity- yeah.

... offers us some really profound, practical answers. It really does. Thanks for joining us- yeah.

Thank you... on this deep dive into the book of Titus. Absolutely.

It's been a pleasure.