

Titus 1:1-4; A Letter to a True Child I. Paul's Identity II. Paul's Purpose III. Paul's Recipient

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, have you ever had one of those parent/ child talks? Usually this comes in the context of a new stage in life or after a serious issue has come up. These parent/child talks are vital as our children grow up- they need to know what to expect and how to respond to various situation. Like when a child goes off to college- his parents send him off with their love but also words of warning and instruction! Well, this morning we get to sit in on one of those father/ son talks. To Titus- my true child in the faith. But what is Paul going to say to his spiritual son? Well, this morning we begin a series on the book of Titus. The book of Titus as a Pastoral Letter, is sometimes overshadowed by the letters to Timothy, but Titus offers us a unique look into the relationship between a mentor and his co-worker. The book of Titus was likely written between 1st and 2nd Timothy- around the year 64AD- very close to the end of Paul's life. As a pastoral epistle, this letter was written to the leaders of a local church and is filled with instruction concerning how to serve within the church. Titus was serving on the island of Crete- which is a good-sized island in the Mediterranean Sea. (3 hour drive east to west) But this island had a very poor reputation- its citizens were known to be lazy, liars, and gluttons as v. 12 reveals. In other words, they were self-centered idolaters who basked in the easy island life. Sounds familiar doesn't it. The church on Crete was very young- as established by Paul- and Titus was left to work with this church. The church was young and was separated from other sister churches by the sea. So no pulpit supply or synod meetings- Titus has a lot on his shoulders. Basically, Paul was instructing the leaders how to establish this church- and the members of the church were instructed how to live in a self-centered world. Today we consider the introduction and greeting- but what is clear right from the beginning is the relationship between the truth and right living. V. 1b could be the theme for this book- the knowledge of the truth leads to godliness. We will consider this theme- Our faithful Lord entrusts His church on Crete with the truth.

I. Paul's Identity

In our first point, we begin by looking at Paul's identity in this letter. We know that this Paul was born a Jew- he was very zealous as a Pharisee and severely persecuted the church. He is a Hebrew of Hebrews- of great pedigree- trained by the best teachers- very strict and zealous. A man of pride and reputation-

but no more. Now, he was converted to the Christian faith and he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. How does Paul identify himself in this letter? Well, first he calls himself a servant of God- literally a bond servant- a slave of God. Although Paul normally calls himself a servant of Christ, here he refers to himself as a servant of God. Standing in the line of both Moses and David- servants of God almighty! A bondservant- one who belongs to another. One who serves at the pleasure of his master. It is clear that Paul does not boast in his credentials- he does not use his human authority or age to force subjection- rather he calls himself a subject. Paul's complete service is rendered to God- one who belongs both body and soul in life and in death to his Savior as LD 1 says. And as an aside, all of spiritual leaders within the church should see themselves this way. We are all slaves to Christ- serving at His pleasure! He continues by stating that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ. Being an apostle means that Paul has been sent –the office has been entrusted to him as v. 3 says. Now when was Paul sent and commissioned by Christ? In Acts 9 after Paul's conversion, Paul is sent out by God- as we read in v. 15- to carry the name of Christ before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. We also read in Gal. 1 that Paul received a direct revelation from Christ. The apostleship was a unique office given to a select few- along with personally meeting Jesus Christ face to face, they also had received accompanying gifts of healing and power. But as an apostle, they received a unique commissioning and authority- sent out by Christ to bring the words of Christ to His people. The authority of the apostle was the authority of Christ himself. They served as emissaries of the King- or as Governor General if you will. To reject their authority is to reject the authority of the King Himself. So already we see that Paul was a man on a mission- living for someone else and speaking on behalf of someone else with the goal of faith and salvation. Those who serve within the church are stewards- we are heralds of His message- representing His authority! The church is Christ's church- the gospel message we bring is His good news- and the people are His sheep- His bride! And finally, Paul identifies himself as the father of Titus in v. 4. You are my true child- I am your spiritual father. In many ways, the word of an elder in the church is similar to that of a parent. In writing this letter, as we will see, Paul is concerned with the spiritual growth and maturity of the church as a whole and his son in particular! And the elders of the church- they discipline and disciple within the church because it is their desire to see the members grow

up- to be mature! As earthly fathers love their children, so elders love the people of the congregation- as Paul loves Titus as a son.

II. Paul's Purpose

Paul continues by outlining his purpose for writing this letter (1b-2). And in fact, the purpose for the letter and the goal of his ministry as an apostle are one and the same- for the sake of the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth. It is in the best interest of the chosen ones that Paul writes this letter- for the good of those whom God has foreordained before the foundation of the world. It is for the good- even for the perseverance of the church that this letter goes forth- and by it the chosen ones are kept in the right and good path. What is clear is that faith is not pre-condition for election- rather it is because God has chosen some that they have faith- and the ministry of the Word is the tool used to engender faith and teach the knowledge of the truth. True faith and right knowledge are inseparable. It is by imparting knowledge- a body of truth- that the church is built up. (1b) And this full knowledge leads to godliness- right knowledge leads you to right practice- by this the church is sanctified.

Orthodoxy leads to Orthopraxy! We should not be ashamed of good theology! There is a direct connection between knowing what is true- believing it as true- and living out of that truth. Faith- believing the truth, changes people! Godliness, reverence, piety- these are the byproduct of the gospel in the churches' life. But remember- we do not live the gospel- rather the gospel truth changes the way we live. And at the same time, it is impossible for those who know the truth not to be led to godliness. As we found out last week- those who are justified will be sanctified! And this growth in godliness is really is the desire of all elders of the church- even today. To see growth and maturity- that the church may grow in grace and knowledge of the truth!

But not only godliness in this life- hope for eternal life as well! Glorification as we heard this morning! The faith and hope that we share- that the church is built upon- is directly connected to the hope of life after death (2). Not only do we desire to flee from eternal death- we desire the glorious riches reserved for God's elect. And this is the reward promised to all the chosen ones. The blessing of heaven has been promised long ago- our passage says in v. 2 that this promise was made before time began! In other words, God's foreordained choice- God specifically electing some in His good pleasure included a

promise that those chosen will certainly receive the blessing of eternal life. It is impossible for the elect to be lost- so also it is impossible for the elect to lose out on the riches of glory! There are blessing for this life and the next! Paul then adds emphasis by stating- the one who made the promise is God- more than that- the un-lying God! If it is not clear yet- the promises of forgiveness, holiness and glory to come- all rely on God who cannot lie! This reward has been promised- and God does not lie! It is here that we find all grace and comfort- the choosing of some- the promise of life eternal- the certainty of blessings- the knowledge of the gospel- such great privileges have been given to us! Such good news! Such marvelous grace! That we would not only have the promises- but we would have the means revealed! That we would not only know about our election- but about the one who purchased our Salvation! As. v.3 says- the things promised have now been revealed. Through the work of Jesus Christ, the blessing of heaven has been gained! And by the continued work of the Son, the gospel preaching goes out so that all may hear about this wondrous work! It is through the preaching that the good news- both the content of truth and knowledge and the certainty of undeserved reward are now may clear! These things have been revealed to you! Gospel preaching not only imparts knowledge, the Spirit uses preaching to instill faith and it instructs in godliness –telling us of the promised eternal life! So the purpose of this letter- indeed the purpose of both Paul’s and Titus’ ministry- is to establish churches upon the truth of God’s Word. And God’s word holds great promises and has a great effect upon those who hear and receive it. Eternal life is manifested because Jesus Christ is revealed!

III. Paul’s Recipient

And finally, we come to v. 4- who has this letter been sent to? To Titus- the young preacher that worked along side of Paul. This young man- like Timothy- was left in a church to order the church and establish local elders. Titus is mentioned in the letter to Galatians and in the letter to the Corinthians and accompanied Paul on many missionary journeys. He was an associate pastor- now the senior pastor of this church. We find that this Titus is called a true son- a genuine child of Paul. Since Titus is not the biological child of Paul, what does Paul mean? Well, Titus along with Timothy take on the role of spiritual descendant- they belong to the one family of God to be sure- but Titus has been very active in the work of Paul- Paul has used Titus as a fellow worker and aid. Titus has been led to Jesus Christ by

the ministry of Paul- there is nothing but love and respect between these two men. A spiritual mentor with his beloved son! So there was a very close connection. It is wonderful thing to see older members take younger members under their wing- to have adopted, spiritual family members in the church! But do not forget, as we find in Gal. 2:3- Titus was a Gentile- an uncircumcised Gentile and Paul was a Hebrew of Hebrews. But within the church these things matter not- there is a bond that is deeper than any biological history that holds God's people together. He is a child in the common faith. A shared faith, hope and love for God unites these two men. This Titus shares a common faith- and as we have seen in recent week- when you share a common faith with someone you will always have a brotherly love. Even if you come from different backgrounds and areas- there is unity for all who have received grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

To conclude, we been privileged to listen in a father has a talk with his son. The son is graduating and taking charge of a church- and his spiritual father is giving him this benediction! Great themes that run through this book are already indicated- the connection between right belief and right practice- the place of the word proclaimed in the local church- the relationship between salvation and sanctification- as well as the unity of faith found in our one Lord! What has been made clear is that God is faithful- God cannot lie! Those who are chosen will receive faith- those elected will be saved- and those saved will receive the blessing of eternal life! For the leaders of the church, there is both authority and responsibility identified. Paul- and now Titus- are charged with bringing Christ's word- the truth of the gospel- to God's people. To preach the full counsel of God's Word! Having received this gospel and the fruit of faith- now we have grace and peace. "Charis and erainae" are ours because of God our Father and the work of Christ Jesus our Savior. Our truthful Lord instructs His church on Crete to know and live in the truth. May the God who never lies send His grace and peace into our hearts by the Spirit!