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*From the Head to the Heart to the Hands:
Truth that Leads to Godliness
Titus 1:1-4
May 17th, 2015, Jeff Germo*

I told you a while ago that in recent years Ruth and I started gardening. We aren't very good at it yet and we continually have to consult Google for advice. But, we are learning. One of the vegetables we tried to grow in our first garden was cucumbers. We studied up on how to grow them and the experts on Google said that you have to wait until the soil is warm to plant them, and in our area that means early to mid June. Well, that year we had a particularly rainy spring and early summer and it didn't warm up until quite late in June. But, we decided to plant our seeds anyway in mid June even though conditions weren't optimal. And we waited, and waited and we waited, but nothing grew. So, we decided to try to replant at the beginning or middle of July. Finally, after another long wait, one plant poked its little head through the soil. The cucumber grew to about six or eight inches in length. It looked a little bit like an overgrown pencil, and then it stopped growing and eventually rotted and became food for the bugs. We failed miserably at growing cucumbers.

We tried the same thing with squash with similar results, actually it was even worse. We planted about ten seeds and got one squash that sprouted and never even grew enough so that we could recognize what kind of a vegetable it was. It just looked like a seedling.

Now, if the goal in gardening was to see one out of ten little seedlings poke their heads through the soil we could have called ourselves successful cucumber and squash gardeners. But the fact of the matter is we wanted to grow healthy, mature cucumbers and squash. We failed miserably at that.

[2]

Likewise, when the seed of the gospel is planted in the heart of a person, the goal is not simply to initiate new life. New life is great, but it's not the end goal. **The gospel, or the good news of Jesus, if planted in the fertile soil of the heart, will produce fruit. If there is no fruit there is a problem with the heart.** That truth is reiterated over and over in the New Testament. That is what we just learned in our study of Galatians.

Today we are starting a brand new series into the letter that Paul wrote to Titus. It's a short letter – only three chapters, but it's full of very relevant teaching for us today. The first verse contains the theme of the letter, and it is without a doubt a statement that most typifies the thrust of my ministry as your pastor.

[3]

The theme of Titus is the inseparable link between faith and practice, or belief and behavior.

[4]

In other words, if you have truth in your brain that doesn't lead to change, it's just taking up valuable space.

Jesus said that in the Gospels. Paul said it all the way through his letters. Jesus' brother, James, said it in his, and the Apostle John said it in his first epistle. If truth does not lead to change, the gospel has fallen on a hard heart and has not taken root. There is a problem. Something is blocking it from getting to your heart and it needs to be dealt with.

[5]

Titus 1:1–4 (ESV)

¹Paul, 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, ²in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began ³and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior; ⁴To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Paul starts his letter in the way that was typical in ancient times. When we write a letter today we start it with "Dear John", and then we write the body and then sign it at the end. Back in the ancient Middle East they would first identify themselves, give a little bit of an introduction, along with, perhaps, a thesis statement of sorts saying what the letter was about, and then they would address the recipient of the letter. Then they would write the body of the letter, and finally sign off.

In verse 4 Paul tells us who the letter is addressed to.

[6]

Titus was one of the many people who partnered with Paul to spread the good news of Jesus and to build the church. He went with Paul on some of his missionary journeys. And Paul left Titus, who was a Greek, on the Isle of Crete. Crete is the largest of the Greek islands, but it's only about a quarter of the size of Vancouver Island. Paul's charge to Titus was to help set up the leadership structure of the churches on the island. So, obviously Paul had a lot of trust in Titus' abilities as a leader. But, we'll take more of a look at that next week.

[7]

Paul calls himself "***a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ...***"

This is the only letter in which Paul addressed himself as a servant of *God*. In Galatians, Romans, and Philippians he referred to himself as a servant of Jesus Christ, which would say to me that Paul recognized by this that Jesus is, in fact, God. And as a matter of fact, aside from Paul, the apostle Peter called himself a servant of Jesus Christ, as did James, Jude and John in Revelation 1:1.

[8]

The word "servant" here is the Greek word, *doulos*, which is literally, "slave," or "bond-servant".

A slave in Paul's day never acted on his own behalf. He, or she only acted under the authority of their owner or master. And, so here, Paul says that all his actions and, in fact, the very words he is about to write to Titus are from God.

And the meaning is actually much richer than that. Let's go back to the Old Testament.

[9]

Deuteronomy 15:12–17 (ESV)

¹² "If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. ¹³ And when you let him go free from you, you shall not let him go empty-handed. ¹⁴ You shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, out of your threshing floor, and out of your winepress. As the LORD your God has blessed you, you shall give to him.

[10]

¹⁵ You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today. ¹⁶ But if he says to you, ‘I will not go out from you,’ because he loves you and your household, since he is well-off with you, ¹⁷ then you shall take an awl, and put it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your slave forever. And to your female slave you shall do the same.

[11]

So, every seventh year, by Jewish law, slaves were to be set free. This was to protect the slaves from abuse. But, when a slave, by his own free will, chose to continue serving his master because of his love for him, he would put his ear against the doorpost; the master would take a hammer and awl and pound the awl through the ear. That act signified that they were bonded for life and the slave would continue serving his master, not out of obligation, but from a deep motive of love.

That is what Paul meant when he said that he was a bondservant of God. He didn't serve God begrudgingly. He didn't see it as a heartache or a heavy burden. It was a pleasure. They had a love relationship and he had the privilege of serving the Almighty God who created the heavens and the earth as an outflow of that love.

Remember in Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus said,

[12]

Matthew 11:28–30 (ESV)

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

[13]

A yoke was something a slave might wear over his shoulders to carry water. It was made of wood and the good ones were custom made. The carpenter would make it to measure for the person who would be using it. If it wasn't made well it would put pressure on their shoulders and cause pain and would make the work harder instead of easier.

Now, Jesus, of course was a master carpenter. He learned from his father, Joseph. Jesus was saying in Matthew 11 that the yokes he makes are the best. They don't make you tired. They make the work easier. And so, Paul, and the other writers in the New Testament said that they were bondservants of Jesus. They gladly and lovingly wore his yoke that he custom made for them.

That's a pretty great picture isn't it? That's what Jesus calls us to. His goal isn't to make us miserable. He said in John 10:10 that he came so that we could have a rich and full life.

[14]

So, Paul says he is a servant of God and then he adds that he is ***“an apostle of Jesus Christ...”*** The word “apostle” literally means “messenger”, or sent one. Paul says he, like the other twelve apostles who walked with Christ while he was alive, was called and sent by Jesus. Paul's calling was quite different from theirs and so those who tried to discredit him disputed his apostleship at times.

Remember Jesus called Paul after the resurrection. He didn't believe in Jesus prior to this. As a matter of fact, he adamantly opposed everything he was about. And then the risen Jesus met him in on the road to Damascus. Paul was on his way to persecute more Christians and Jesus met him in a blinding light and told

him that he was calling him for a very specific purpose, and from that point on Paul had a seismic sized paradigm shift in his thinking. He became the greatest Christian evangelist of all time.

[15]

Before his Damascus Road experience he was an enemy of Jesus. Can you imagine the significance of this? It would be like Christopher Hitchens, or Richard Dawkins suddenly coming to faith in Christ. These are famous atheists who have spent their lives trying to discredit the very idea that there could be a God. Now, Christopher Hitchens, has since died and has had to face the God he didn't believe in, but the Apostle Paul coming to faith in Christ would have been just like one of these guys doing the same. It would be earth-shattering news.

This is the Paul who said that he was *“a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ...”* He did nothing on his own authority.

[16]

Paul continues, *“for the sake of the faith of God's elect...”*

Here we come to Paul's incentive, his *raison d'être*, his purpose, and his call. It's the thing he keeps in front of him to keep himself going when things get tough. He is *“a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus for the sake of the elect.”*

He said a very similar thing to Timothy in his second letter.

[17]

2 Timothy 2:10 (ESV)

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.

Paul said the thing that keeps him going even when things get unbearable is knowing that God has entrusted to him the task of bringing the gospel to more people. Turn over to 2 Corinthians for a picture of the kinds of things Paul endured for the sake of the Gospel.

[18]

2 Corinthians 11:23–29 (ESV)

He said, [I endured] far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. ²⁴ Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.

[19]

²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; ²⁶ on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers;

[20]

²⁷ in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸ And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?

Why would Paul endure all of that suffering? What keeps him going? The answer is that he knows his calling. He understands fully that God has entrusted him with the task of building the church.

Notice, as Paul continues in Titus, he is not simply concerned with gaining more converts.

[21]

¹ 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,

Yes, he is passionate about leading more and more people to the knowledge of the truth of Jesus, but it doesn't end there. What happens when truth is rightly appropriated in the soft heart of one who seeks God? That truth leads to godliness.

Friends, this is the crux of the whole book of Titus. There were false teachers, legalists, who were creeping into the church. Paul said they were ***"part of the circumcision group."*** They were part of a group that taught that in order to be saved you had to follow the Old Testament law in regards to circumcision, and the feasts and things like that. Sound familiar? Titus answers the question, "What is the next step after Galatians?" What kind of life pleases God?

In 2 Timothy Paul described what happens when the truth of the gospel does not take root.

[22]

2 Timothy 3:5–7 (ESV)

⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. ⁶ For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, ⁷ always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. ⁷ always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

And Paul wrote to Titus in 1:16 the same thing.

[23]

Titus 1:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

There are those who call themselves believers, Paul said, who look the part, and are very eager to gain more knowledge of God's Word, but they simply have fat heads.

[24]

If you have truth in your brain that doesn't lead to change, it's just taking up valuable space.

As James, the brother of Jesus said, ***"Faith without works is dead."***

Paul was not just concerned about winning more people for Christ. His greater concern was that those he won to Christ would mature in their faith, that they would look more and more like Jesus, and that their faith would lead to action; that it would move from their **head, to their hearts, to their hands.**

I want to be honest with you here. I lived most of my life with a huge number of blind spots. I was so unaware of just how immature I was. I was ignorant as to how my behaviour and my lack of emotional intelligence was hurting others and how it was impeding my relationships. It was quite painful to see all of that, but let me tell you, it is much better than the alternative, which is a painfully lonely existence. Jesus has so much life for us right now, and we simply need to join him in his invitation to take his yoke upon us and learn from, for he is gentle and humble in heart. If we do, we will have so much abundant life.

But wait there's more. I know that sounded like an infomercial, but it's true. There is so much more.

[25]

Titus 1:1–4 (ESV)

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We have a hope, from the God who never lies, of eternal life with him. This is not the kind of hope like “I hope I win the lottery,” or “I hope the Canucks win the Stanley Cup this year.”

When the Bible talks about hope it is a hope based on something that has been sealed since before the ages began. God never lies. He always keeps his promises. For those of us who have trusted in Christ's finished work on the cross eternal life awaits us when we die. That is as real as anything can be. “We can take that to the bank.” But, that's not all there is. Our life with Christ is not just in the future. It's now. And as we humbly submit to the Lordship of Christ, his Spirit will do a work in our hearts. He will change us, making us useful and fruitful, and give our lives meaning. That is what we have to look forward to every day with Jesus.



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Titus 1:1-4
Week of May 17th, 2015

Objective of this study: To understand, at a heart level, the main theme of Titus, that belief and practice are inseparable.

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Spend five minutes in silent prayer asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
2. After the five minutes of silence have someone interrupt the silence and read Psalm 139 meditatively to the group. Then pause for about a minute and let it sink in.
3. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Welcome (5 – 10 minutes)

What's this silliest thing you've done, trying to impress someone? Were they impressed?

Word/Work (60 - 75 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Together, as a group, read all of Titus in one sitting. While you are reading pay attention to recurring themes or words.
3. Read through it again. This time each person will read it silently and prayerfully, underlining or writing down any recurring themes or words you see. Take about 15 minutes or so for this. Don't be afraid of silence.
4. Regroup and share your findings.
5. What is the Lord saying to you? What should the focus of your life be? What changes do you need to make to cooperate with Jesus?
6. Spend some time praying for each other that you would become the men and women God has called you to be.