

Sermon Series
Titus
Sunday, January 6, 2019

Title: The Church, A Witness to Grace

Subject: Crete: Paul, Peace with God, the Church, Church Spiritual Growth, Grace, Means of Grace, the Gospel, Salvation, Jesus Christ, Eternal Life

Theme Text: Titus 1:1 (NIV2011)¹ Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—

Theme Illustration: In our theme text, Paul connects a growing knowledge of God, not just a head knowledge, but also an experiential knowledge that leads to real godliness. We must remember what godliness is; godliness reflects His character and nature. What we know both in our head, doctrine, and what we know in our hearts having grasped and experienced God's grace, leads to godliness. All of this presupposes that you been born again.

Now why is this important? How are we as a believer or as a church going to be a witness to Christ and his kingdom if we don't reflect who we say we represent?

This message is my challenge to us as a church for the future. Let me ask you, is Christ finished growing His church? Has Christ finished growing this church? When I use the word grow, I use it the same way Jesus uses it in **Matthew 16:18 (NIV2011)**¹⁸ **And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.** We must continue the mindset that this church is in the midst of a building program since our founding. I am not challenging us to form a building committee to work on physical plant as yet. We already have a building committee, the congregation, the leadership, the teachers, the encouragers, and a vision of what a built church is from the pages of the holy Scriptures.

A growing church is a surrendered body of believers in Jesus Christ, bonded together by the gospel, saved by the grace of God, worshiping together under the authority of the word of God, observing the ordinances as commanded by Jesus, and growing in both our knowledge of grace and in the fruit of grace.

How is the world ever going to be attracted to our God except by the God of grace drawing people to Himself, the message of God's grace, and our dependence upon grace as we are a witness and a window into the grace that is available to anyone and is the people's only hope of escaping the wrath of God. The only way to godliness is faith that depends upon grace. It is to that end I am going to be preaching from the book of Titus which is Paul's letter to his friend telling him to get busy and get the church going.

Read: Titus 1:1-4

Introduction: Paul has dispatched his trusted friend and coworker, Titus, to finish the work on the island of Crete by appointing church leaders, refuting false teachers, and teaching them sound doctrine of God's grace. This is what Paul's estimation of them was, **Titus 1:12 (NIV2011)** ¹² **One of Crete's own prophets has said it: "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons."** This estimation led to Paul's diagnosis, **Titus 1:16 (NIV2011)** ¹⁶ **They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.** These people are great material, aren't they?

So, Paul issues some very specific instructions to Titus as to how to correct the situation. The church on Crete was beset by Judaizers who oppose the doctrines of God's grace. The infusion of legalism, coupled by a weak set of leaders, left the church vulnerable.

As a background, the culture on Crete at that time was at a deplorable moral level. These converts had come from that culture. Paul never said anything like he said about Crete concerning the church at Corinth and we all know what a mess they were. Paul's point or his diagnosis is that a people who know God's grace will live by that grace which will not produce loose living, but godliness.

If the church is to be the church on Crete or in Hereford, and a witness to the gospel of God's grace they must reflect the power of grace in their own lives and living. Grace is not God's permission to live anyway we want to, but God's power to live as He desires and calls us to live.

Transition: We will examine grace's means, Grace's reach, and grace's fruit. First, we see:

1. Grace's Means: Titus 1:1 (NIV2011) ¹ Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—

Paul merely introduces himself as a servant of God and a chosen messenger of Jesus Christ. Paul had always seen himself as a servant of God, but the service Paul had offered God before his conversion was an effort to establish his own status before God. In an arrogant pursuit of his own righteousness, Paul had become an opponent of the God he claimed to serve. His story is that God will pardon the worst of sinners and will make them useful servants in His kingdom.

Paul explains the purpose of his apostleship. He is a messenger for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness. The goal of Paul's ministry is a godly people. Those who believe are God's elect. This means their eternal status is determined by the love, grace, and mercy of the heart of God not by any work or merit on the part of the believer.

God's choice is solely out of His mercy not on any actual or foreseen goodness, godliness or holiness in the person who was chosen. Salvation is going to be God's work from beginning to end by grace.

The means of how we come to possess this powerful grace is by the knowledge of the truth possessed by people in a surrendered relationship with God and not just heads filled with all kinds of religious facts. The order of these words in verse one is important to note. Godly conduct itself does not lead to a relationship with God. Rather it is our grace relationship with God that gospel faith creates and leads to righteousness and righteous living. God's means of grace is the apostles teaching including the gospel and the mercy of God extended to us. These have real effects upon us. Grace is powerful!

Transition: Just how powerful is grace? We see the power of grace in trusting:

2. Grace's Reach: Titus 1:2-3 (NIV2011) ² in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, ³ and which now at His appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,

The reach of grace is eternal! The relationship that God began with us by grace will last beyond this life, **Romans 5:20-21 (NIV2011) ²⁰ The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹ so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

In Titus 12, Paul is saying that at the appointed time, God brings the truth to light through preaching. This is true of us as well.

Paul emphasizes that his message did not originate with him or in his time. The way of eternal life by grace was promised before anything or anyone was created. Paul adds that this promise comes to us through one who cannot lie and has the power to bring everything he promises to pass. Grace had its origins in eternity and extends into eternity. None of us have to worry about running out of God's supply of grace.

Transition: The big mistake we make in our knowledge and understanding of grace is that we just don't realize grace is power and that power produces:

3. Grace's Fruit: Titus 1:4 (NIV2011) ⁴ To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Grace has real effects, peace from God and peace of God in the lives of those who are in God's grace, **John 14:27 (NIV2011) ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.** The real effects of grace are mind blowing. Grace unites us in mutual dependence upon God regardless of experience or background or ability. You need to notice something the grace does. Notice Paul calls this Gentile Titus, his son in the faith. Grace has the power to unite and break down all barriers.

The question is how does grace produce peace? When people are absolutely convinced that their standing before God is based upon grace and not on any goodness in ourselves, peace comes. A full acceptance and understanding of grace provide relief from a constant striving for status and affection from God. All the rewards of grace are totally unearned.

Our common faith is the recognition that all men are in need of a Savior. There is no basis or ration now for pride or judgment full is him. Where grace is known and embraced, all our own antipathies will wither when grace blossoms.

This reminds us that we must offer the solus of grace to those who have failed God or fear that they will. With two messages for two groups. To those who say that their sin is too great for God to forgive, we say, but his grace is great! To those, who fearing personal weaknesses, say I just cannot measure up, we say, God does not save you on your ability to measure up but by His grace and mercy alone. Christ measures up!

An accurate view of God brings a sharp awareness of sin, a deep humility, and desire to live for God.

Conclusion: This is the kind of church Jesus Christ is building. Christ has been building this church since our founding. In March will be celebrating our 60th anniversary. I can promise you that in this building program there will be no strategist hired, no pledge cards mailed out, no strong-armed appeal from the pulpit, but the planting of a Christlike vision in our minds and hearts that this church has believed in and stood up for since our building program began in 2000. The church will move and build as the God of grace moves us. A church building program must first envision how Christ wants to build his church. The issue is again what kind of church are we to be? This may involve the vision to finish the job this church began when phase I and phase II were finished. Phase 3 remains real in the minds of those who all along have carried the heavy lifting to ensure that this building was paid off as the vision continues. Our conversation will be about what kind of church are we to be. We all agreed that God is not calling us to be a mega church or to build buildings as monuments to a former pastor or your current pastor. We're not trying to impress anybody.

All of this is secondary to Christ's vision of his church. All you have to do is to read in Revelation chapter 20 for Christ's view of the church, a holy City! His view is a vision of grace built by grace and a great commitment from God's own people to holiness. This is the theme of this entire letter, **Titus 2:11-14 (NIV2011)** ¹¹ **For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.** ¹² **It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,** ¹³ **while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,** ¹⁴ **who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.** I'm going to have these verses prominently displayed throughout our church.

The doctrines of grace teach us that the gospel does not minimize the requirements for godly living, but the gospel becomes the motivation for such a life. Life must or will conform to our doctrine. Grace produces godliness.

When the message of the gospel comes unhitched from godliness, faith suffers a death blow. The message of grace apart from godliness destroys the hope that the gospel offers. It is by the grace of God through the means of his people that Christ will build this church.