

**Text: Titus 1:1-4**

**Title: “Growing Disciples ... Anchored in the Word”**

**SERMON BUMPER** –The Bible says that all Scripture is inspired (breathed out) by God and is profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that we may all be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

So with that knowledge let’s open our Bibles to the book of Titus. You’ll find it near the end of the NT. Titus along with I & II Timothy are called the Pastoral Epistles or Letters. Paul writes to two relatively young pastors showing them how to lead their churches. Timothy was in Ephesus and Titus was on the Greek island of Crete ... both very difficult places for Christ-followers to carry out their mission. So Paul writes to show Titus how churches are to be led and structured to make growing disciples in difficult cultural settings.

Titus will be helpful to us in this season in the life of our church for at least two reasons. One, we want our church to be structured in such a way that we produce growing disciples who live godly and productive lives. And Paul shows Titus and us exactly how to do that. At the end of our worship today you’ll hear about some proposed changes to the structure of our church that will better position us to produce growing disciples.

There’s another reason this letter is particularly relevant to us today. Paul left Titus in Crete to shepherd the churches in a very crooked culture. Historians from that time tell of the corruption and immorality that existed on the island Crete in Bible times. But Gospel seeds were planted there, perhaps by Jews who were at Pentecost where they got saved and returned to their island home proclaiming the Jesus. People were saved and churches sprang up in towns around the island. But they faced the same challenges that we face as we strive to live out our discipleship in a culture that is increasingly secular and corrupt.

**Read Titus 1:1-4.** This introduction is actually one long sentence. And at the beginning in v.1 we have Paul’s selfie, if you will. He identifies himself as “a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ...” In calling himself a servant Paul owns the fact that his will has been swallowed up in the will of God. In calling himself an apostle he is establishing his authority as a man chosen and called by Christ Himself to speak truth that carries with it the very authority of Christ.

And at the end of the sentence in v.4 we have the recipient, Titus, whom Paul calls “my true son in our common faith.” Paul probably led Titus to faith in Christ and

had disciplined and mentored him over the years. Titus has been with Paul through much of his missionary work. Now Paul has left Titus on the island of Crete with a very challenging assignment. We're told in v.5 that Titus is to "straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town," teaching them how to live as growing disciples of Jesus in a dark society. So we get a picture of what God is up to in our lives as believers and in the church where we live out our faith as growing disciples.

This first sentence (vv.1-4) is incredibly rich and densely packed with truth. One way to eat this rich sentence is a bite at a time, focusing on seven key words that form a logical progression of what God has been up to in history, in our lives and in the church. So here we go. The first word I want you to locate is the word...

## 1. ELECT

It says in v.1 that Paul's ministry is for the faith of the "elect." That word is used throughout Scripture to refer to the people of God. We are the objects of God's great affection and choosing. You see, the story of the Bible is the story of God seeking out a people for Himself. It started with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel) Israel's sons became the tribes of Israel, the OT elect or people of God. Out of that lineage came Jesus Christ who was not just the Savior of Israel, but of all people. So God expands His elect to those who become a child of God by faith in Christ.

The reason that any of us are saved and have eternal life is that God is seeking out a people for Himself. That ought to take your breath away. You didn't just start out on a quest to find God. You were lost in your sins and God came after you. You were dead in your sins and God made you alive through Christ. And it's all because He elected us, chose us, called us to be His very own people.

The next word I want you to locate is the word...

## 2. FAITH

Paul said in v.1, "I am a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ *for the faith* of God's elect." He's part of the process of God calling people to faith. The way we enter into this life of the elect people of God is through our faith and trust in His promise. On the God side of the salvation equation He seeks us, calls us and draws us to Himself. On the human side of the salvation equation we enter into the life of God by faith. We hear the Good News that Christ has died for our sins and

rose again in order for us to have this life. And we believe, we trust, we put our faith in what God has done for us. By faith we receive this gift.

**Hebrews 11:6 - And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.**

As an apostle Paul is concerned that people would begin their new life by faith, but they would also increase and grow in their faith. Faith is our spiritual muscle that is strengthened as it is exercised when we trust in God for whatever challenges we face in life. Are you becoming more and more dependent on His presence and His provision in your life every day?

The next word I want you to locate is the word...

### **3. KNOWLEDGE**

Again, v.1 says that Paul's ministry is for the sake of the faith of God's elect and also for their "knowledge of the truth." So we enter into the life of God through faith and that faith is based upon the knowledge that certain things are true.

**ILLUSTRATION** – I'm going to get on an airplane later tonight. I will walk on to that plane, buckle into my seat and put my faith in certain truths. First, that this metal tube with wings on it can actually fly. And second, that the pilots flying this metal tube with wings know what they're doing and where they're going. My faith is based upon that knowledge.

The Bible says that God wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Jesus said that He is the way, the *truth* and the life. So with that knowledge I put my trust in Him. But also the Word of God, the Bible, is truth. I read my Bible and I trust in the knowledge of what is true about God and my life in God. And we'll see next week that Paul's great concern is that Titus must insure that elders are in place in the churches to teach sound doctrine ... that believers are taught and gain the knowledge of the truth.

**2 Peter 3:18a - But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

The next word I want you to locate is the word...

#### **4. GODLINESS**

**Titus 1:1b - For the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—**

There's a powerful link between what we believe and how we behave. Our faith in Christ and our knowledge of the truth will lead to godliness. Do you want to know what godliness is? It is simply taking God seriously... in our worship, in our obedience and in our service to Him. Our knowledge of the truth of Christ and His Word will lead to godliness.

And this is a big concern that Paul conveys to Titus and the leaders of the church in Crete. Remember Cretans were crusty people. They have the reputation of being evil and corrupt. But God had called and elected them out of that culture, chosen and saved by God through their faith in Christ. They were growing in their knowledge of the truth in Christ which leads to godly living in an ungodly world. Look to the next chapter...

**Titus 2:11-12 - For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,**

Do you see the connection between the truth you know and the truth you live in godliness? Next Paul digs down a little deeper and we see what's underneath all of this. The next word is ...

#### **5. HOPE**

It says in Titus 1:2 that the faith and knowledge that leads to godliness rests "on the hope of eternal life." I just read from Titus 2:12 where it says we are to say "no" to ungodliness and "yes" to godly living in this present age. Then it goes on to say...

**Titus 2:13 - While we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,**

**ILLUSTRATION** – For you guys who are married, suppose your wife comes to you while you're watching the Masters this afternoon and she says, "You have to get up and go put on your best suit, shirt and shoes." If you're really dumb you will ignore her. If not, you might go on and do it, but you're wondering, "Why go to all

this trouble? Why am I dressed up like this?” But it would be different if your wife came to you and said, “Honey, I’ve planned a big surprise for you. I know you really admire the great golfer Jack Nicklaus. There’s a special reception being held for him and I’ve managed to get us tickets. Get up and get dressed. We’re going someplace special.” Well that changes everything, doesn’t it? There’s a reason you’re getting dressed up; you’re going someplace special.

And the reason we are “getting dressed up” in godly living is not just to make us miserable. It is because we are going somewhere special. Our hope, the assurance we have, is that life isn’t always going to be the way it is now. One day there will be the glorious appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ. When Christ comes again God is going to make all things new including our bodies. In our new resurrection bodies there will be no sin, not even the temptation to sin. So today we persevere in godliness because we know that one day, godliness will be second-nature to us for eternity.

Some days the hope of eternal life is a real and powerful motivation inside of us. At other times it seems so distant and virtually impossible. We lose hope and we just settle for living for today. That leads to the next word I want you to notice ...

## **6. PROMISE**

We come back to and hold on to the faithfulness and the promise of God.

**Titus 1:2b - The hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,**

I can go to all the effort of growing in my faith and knowledge and godliness and hope because God is faithful to His promises. God never lies; He never goes back on His word. God made a promise to Himself far back in eternity past that He would bring to Himself a people who would be His very own holy people. So when He promised eternal life to those who believe, He will do it.

**Philippians 1:6 - being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.**

Now how do I know that God has promised something so amazing? How do I know that God is up to something so incredible in me? That leads me to the next word ...

## 7. WORD

**Titus 1:3 - and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,**

What God promised from before time began He chose to make known at an appointed time through preaching the word ... the Gospel.

**ILLUSTRATION** –In the movie *Bobby Jones: Stroke of Genius*, actor Jim Caviezel played the role of the legendary golfer Bobby Jones, who dominated the world of golf in the 1920s. The closing scene of the film had Jones, along with his friend O.B. Keeler, driving into an open field overlooking rolling hills and beautiful trees just outside of Augusta, Georgia. Bobby got out of the car and stood in the knee-deep grass. He said, “We’re standing on the first tee. I’m going to call it Augusta National.” Bobby Jones saw more than grass, trees and hills. He envisioned a golf course, and not just any golf course. He envisioned the Augusta National Golf Club becoming one of the great golf courses of the world. So go home today and turn on your TV and just look at the magnificent beauty of the course and the drama of the tournament. It all started with a vision.

And God had a vision with big plans for the people He is bringing to Himself, as they place their faith in Christ and grow in the knowledge of the truth that leads them to godliness based on the hope that in eternity they will experience real, eternal life. God promised Himself this would happen and He communicated that to us through His Word ... the Living Word, His Son Jesus Christ, and the written Word in the Bibles we hold in our hands. And He did this through the teaching of people like Paul and Titus and the elders in Crete and those who teach the Word to us.

You get the bottom of all of this and there is the foundation of the Word of God. Growing disciples are anchored in the Word of God where we see the vision of what God is up to in our lives in this life and for eternity.

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