

MAINTAINING ORDER IN THE CHURCH

TITUS 1:1-16 (PART 1)

MAIN IDEA

In order to reflect the nature and character of god; our individual lives and the life of the church ought to be orderly and not chaotic.

I. THE BASIS OF ORDER (VS 1-4)

God has presented the gospel to us in an orderly, timely, and logical way.

- A. GOD'S SERVANT (1a)
- B. GOD'S PERFECT TIMING (1b-3)
- C. GOD'S GRACE AND PEACE (4)

II. THE METHOD OF ORDER (VS 5-9)

God has placed godly men and women in leadership positions to ensure an orderly administration of the gospel.

- A. ORDAINING ELDERS (5-7a)
- B. WHAT ELDERS SHOULD NOT BE (7b)
- C. WHAT ELDERS SHOULD BE (8-9)

III. THE DAMAGE OF DISORDER (10-16)

One of the most discouraging and energy draining tasks of pastors and church leaders is dealing with rebellious people.

- A. THE DANGER OF THE DISORDERLY (10-11)
- B. THE SOCIETY IN WHICH DISORDER THRIVES (13-14)
- C. THE DISORDERED LIVES OF THE DISORDERLY (15-16)

Maintaining Order in the Church

Titus 1:1-16 (Part 1)

This morning we are going to start the book of Titus. Even though it appears after First and Second Timothy in our Bibles, it was probably written shortly after First Timothy. Second Timothy was written last; as we have said before, Second Timothy probably contains some of the last written words of the Apostle Paul. First Timothy and Titus were written sometime between 63 and 67 AD. The Apostle Paul was released from his first imprisonment in Rome around 63 and then rearrested in 67. He was martyred in May or June of 68 AD. It almost seems as if Paul and Titus started these churches on Crete shortly after his release from prison in 63.

Crete was an extremely chaotic island that had morals a lot like we do in our society. They valued money above everything else. They didn't care how one made his or her fortune; they only valued the point that this person amassed a fortune. They used the money to fulfill their lust for power and worldly lustful pleasures. We could describe their society and ours as chaotic. Like our society, they were in chaos because they had no moral values. In fact, they were proud of their lack of values.

One day a physician, an engineer, and a politician were discussing who among them belonged to the oldest of the three professions represented. The physician said, "Remember, on the sixth day God took a rib from Adam and fashioned Eve, making him the first surgeon. Therefore, medicine is the oldest profession."

The engineer replied, "But, before that, God created the heavens and earth from chaos and confusion, and thus he was the first engineer. Therefore, engineering is an older profession than medicine."

Then, the politician spoke up. "Yes," he said, "But who do you think created all of the chaos and confusion?"

Crete is an island off the coast of Greece and is the largest island in that chain of islands and the 5th largest island in the Mediterranean. It is approximately 160 miles long, 8 miles wide at its narrowest, and 35 miles wide at its widest. Its climate is mild and the island has many good natural harbors. Because of its location, it was very multiethnic. Money was their top priority and the only value that mattered. Titus was sent to the church in Corinth to straighten it up so you know that Titus had some thick skin. Unlike Timothy, Titus must have been a pretty tough guy. Ministry in Corinth didn't get much tougher. My guess is that Crete was a lot like Corinth so Titus knew what he was in for.

At any rate, this was a tough crowd. Really, it's pretty hard to live in the United States as a committed Christian and it's pretty hard to pastor churches in the United States because society's values have permeated the church. Even when we try to live holy lives, we have to realize that we have brought into the church worldly values because we live in a society that lives by, teaches, and hammers into all of us its worldly values. However, if we are going to live as citizens in God's Kingdom, we have to use our hearts, souls, and minds to get rid of these. It's hard but that's our calling as followers of Jesus.

Titus is going to go and fight these worldly attitudes in the churches on Crete. It sounds as if Paul and Titus planted a lot of small churches in different cities on the island of Crete. Now Titus is going to try and organize them and prepare them to grow into mature churches that will make a serious impact for Christ. The Kingdom of God is now going to advance on Crete. That's how we need to look at the mission of our small local church here. The main idea of this morning's text is this. **IN ORDER TO REFLECT THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF GOD; OUR INDIVIDUAL LIVES AND THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH OUGHT TO BE ORDERLY AND NOT CHAOTIC.**

In other words, the way we live should reflect the nature and character of God. We need to keep in mind that God's values are opposite of the world's. We are going to be living and acting counter-culturally. As we watch Titus go about organizing the local churches on Crete, we should try and apply these principles to our individual lives and the life of the church.

I. THE BASIS OF ORDER (VS 1-4)

In verses 1-4, we learn the basis of order is found in God Himself. **GOD HAS PRESENTED THE GOSPEL TO US IN AN ORDERLY, TIMELY, AND LOGICAL WAY.** God chose Paul to be His servant as Paul describes it in the first half of verse 1. Like Paul's other letters, the greeting follows the basic structure of the ancient letter writing protocol. It lists the writer, the recipient, and some form of greeting. Paul uses two powerful descriptors to identify himself. First, he identifies himself as a servant of God. Actually, to get the full force of this, it should read slave of God. Very few people are identified as slaves of God in the Bible. Moses, Joshua, David, and prophets are identified as slaves of God. In the book of Isaiah, there are several passages that describe Jesus in the servant passages. All these people willingly placed themselves before God to be used at His pleasure. They surrendered all their rights and privileges in order to do whatever God needed done. We know all these people suffered a great deal to accomplish God's mission and the advance of God's Kingdom.

I think this is a good corrective for those of us who think living for Christ should be easy. One of the designations we don't spend thinking about enough is that we are soldiers in God's Kingdom. God's Kingdom is advancing, taking ground, and headed for the day when it becomes physically manifest here on earth. It is a great honor that God has placed His faith in us to accomplish His will and His Kingdom here on earth. Let's start to take that phrase a little more seriously in the Lord's Prayer when we pray, "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Let us present ourselves before God as servants to be used at His pleasure. It is a noble calling.

Paul then describes himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. The word apostle has at least four meanings during New Testament times. It commonly referred to people who were sent out on a mission, usually a diplomatic mission on behalf of a dignitary. It referred to the Twelve Apostles Jesus chose and sent out to evangelize and disciple the world. They were on a special diplomatic mission from God to announce the Good News that anyone could be right with God and that God's Kingdom was making its final push towards the destruction of evil once and for all. Paul was chosen and sent in a much different way from the 11. Jesus met him on the road to Damascus. Paul was headed there to hunt down, persecute, and arrest Christians. He was known by the name Saul in those days. Jesus met him, broke him, and commissioned him right there on the road. That incident is recorded in Acts chapter 9. Third, it was used by Jesus referring to the mission of the 70 he sent out to preach the coming of the Gospel in towns he was about to visit. It was also used

to describe a spiritual gift. The gift of apostle in the early church seems to be closely related to our modern day missionaries. We send them out, usually to foreign countries, with the intent to bring the message of the Gospel to people who have not heard it before.

Even though Jesus spoke this command to the 11 before He returned to heaven, it applies to us as individuals and as a local church:

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age'.

Matthew 28:18-20 / Today's New International Version

As children of God, as His very special ambassadors, as His friends, and as soldiers of His Kingdom, we are tasked as individuals and as a local church to carry on with the ministry of Jesus Christ; leading the lost to faith in Jesus, bringing healing and wholeness to their lives, and helping them to grow in their faith so they too can fulfill their destinies as soldiers in God's Kingdom. There is a cult that teaches that the Kingdom of God is full. It is not full until the last person marked for faith is brought safely into the Kingdom. We are to live for Christ until He returns again and establishes His physical Kingdom here on earth.

The second half of verse 1 through verse 3 describes God's perfect timing. There is a word used in these verses that doesn't translate very well; but it seems to tie the theme together. The word is *kata*. In general, it is translated "according to." Let me give you an example of its usage. Each Gospel title in Greek starts with this word: Kata Matthew, Kata Mark, Kata Luke, and Kata John. We translate that into The Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In this portion of the prologue, the word Kata is used 3 times. Our text starts out in the second half of verse 1 with, "to further the faith of God's elect." Literally it says, "kata to the faith of God's elect." Therefore, the King James Version translates this phrase, "according to the faith of God's elect." The complete phrase is, "to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth."

Paul is called and commissioned according to the truth and command of God. That is meant to connect to the final phrase in verse 3 where Paul says that he preaches according to the command of God. Paul's faith, service, and calling are all in accordance with the truth of God's Word; His written Word, the Bible and His living Word, Jesus. Paul did not make up doctrine nor did he promote himself to a leadership position. Today, we have the testimony of the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and the testimony of the historical church for 2,000 years, and the written history of the nation of Israel for another 2,000 years. Our faith is based on the truth of God as written down in Scripture. The fact that Jesus rose from the dead is as certain as $2+2=4$.

Here is what Paul is saying. He has been called and commissioned by Jesus Christ. He is given himself to God in service as a slave. He has given up all his rights. He does this according to the faith as laid out in Scripture and he has dedicated himself to bringing people the truth that God loves them and invites them into a relationship with Him. The truth is meant to lead them to faith. Now we get to the last kata in verse 2. The last phrase in verse 2 reads, "kata godliness." Sometimes I think Christians try and pit the Apostle Paul against James. They say Paul talks about salvation by faith alone; James says that we are saved by works. But right here, Paul makes it clear

that genuine faith that is based on the truth and commands of God lead us to live godly lives. Clearly, simply living a good life does not bring us into a relationship with God. However, being in a genuine relationship with God leads us to godly conduct. For Paul it would be inconceivable for people who are in a genuine relationship with God based on the truth of the Scriptures to lead ungodly lives. He will make this point again at the end of this first chapter. The formula is this. The more we gain knowledge of the truth, the more our faith grows. The more our faith grows, the more we will live godly lives that reflect the nature, the character, and the Kingdom of God.

Paul goes on to explain that his calling and commissioning came at the appointed season. God's timing is perfect. There was no more of a perfect time for Jesus to enter human history than when He did. Most of the known world existed within the Roman Empire. The Romans had made travel relatively safe and their road construction made travel easier than it had ever been. Almost all of the known world spoke Greek so the spread of the Gospel was easy in the sense that Paul, the Apostles, and the early church did not need to learn foreign languages to evangelize the world. I want to revisit this last phrase in verse 3. He says that he has accepted this assignment of preaching truth according to God our Savior.

Paul started verse 1 by referring to God and to Jesus Christ. Here in verse 3 he calls God, God our Savior. That is exactly Jesus' Name in Hebrew. *Yeshua* means God is our salvation in Hebrew. Now think of this section. At the perfect time in history, God the Father sent God the Son to earth so that through the finished work of Jesus, salvation would be available to all who would believe. There were no ethnic, racial, religious, gender, or status barriers to prevent people from entering God's Kingdom. We believe in a historical Jesus who entered human history in the flesh and lived as a human being. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, made the lame to walk, and even raised the dead. He offered a relationship with God to anyone who wanted one. He died for our sins and He physically rose from the dead to guarantee He was Who He said He was. We have a historical record in the Bible. Jesus said that He was the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus is truth. There is salvation in no other name.

Paul sees himself and his ministry standing in this rich salvation history. From Abraham to Paul is about 2,000 years of salvation history. From Paul to us is another 2,000 years. We stand in 4,000 years of historical salvation history. That is the truth. Truth is going to be an important theme; especially on the island of Crete.

In verse 4, Paul offers grace and peace to Titus. He refers to Titus as his true son. We can easily see that he views Timothy and Titus equally. He views them both as his sons in the faith. As we said earlier, it appears as if Timothy was timid but Titus seems to be pretty thick skinned. Titus has been battle tested in Corinth.

We again come across this word *kata*. He is addressing Titus as his true son according to their common faith. Christianity is not some private or individual religion or experience. Christianity is meant to be lived out in the context of community. I think this is an important point for us to understand since we in the United States think everything has to do with our individual interpretations. If the way you are interpreting a passage is in direct contradiction with the consensus of evangelical scholarship; then you can be quite sure your interpretation is wrong. I think this is where the church in the United States has gotten off track. In the 60's and 70's, home Bible studies were growing like wildfire. The problem was this. A person would open the Bible,

tell what he thought it meant, and then threw it open for everyone to give their opinion concerning the meaning of the passage. Everyone's opinion was given equal respect and equal weight. If we are believers in Christ, then we share a common faith. Before I get up here and preach, I make sure my teaching is in agreement with evangelical scholarship. If it is not, I make sure to warn you that what I am saying is not in agreement. In the end, I must submit to the historical church's interpretations. The Apostle Peter warned his congregation of this when he said:

¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." ¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. ¹⁹ We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:16-21 / Today's New International Version

This is going to be an extremely important point as we get into Titus because Cretan society believed everybody's interpretation was just as good as another's. They really were not interested in truth.

We have no moral compass that guides our society today. Our society teaches that one religion is just as true as another. Our society punishes those who stand up for the truths of Judaism and Christianity. We live in an age of moral relativity. People simply believe what they see on television and for most people their morality comes directly from what station they get their news from. Television news stations whip their viewers up into seemingly moral frenzies; but even those who claim to speak and live according to the truths in Scripture blatantly twist Scripture to fit their particular point of view.

Since we are tasked with making disciples of all nations; we need to really understand who we are presenting the message to. In order to receive a Savior, a person needs to understand they are in need of a Savior. The problem is that most people in our society have no concept of what sin is and they have no idea what God's standards for righteousness are. Since everyone has the freedom to make up their own religion and moral standards, there is no longer anyway to talk about religion and truth.

Look, we know that Jesus rose from the dead. We know that as we examine our lives and compare them to the commands God has laid down, we fall far short. We have no trouble understanding our need for the Savior. One way we can advance the Kingdom of God is to live out the truth on a daily basis. Too many Christians live out the commands of God as they see them. For example, they fudge and manipulate the truth to get what they want; and the claim to not be lying. Many Christians are involved in pornography or actually acting out in sexually immoral ways; while thinking they are good Christians. As Paul will later tell Titus, that is not possible.

We are to be living examples of God's grace and peace. Living out those truths will give people cause to question their own lifestyles. In verse 4, Paul blesses Titus with grace and peace from God the Father and Jesus the Savior.

Grace and Peace is what God offers us. Most letters in Paul's day began with a form of the word grace, which meant, "Greetings." But Paul uses the word grace. Grace to Christians means all the undeserved blessings and mercies God bestows on us every day. In other words every breath I take is a gift from God. In our study through the Psalms, we talked a lot about God's loving-kindness. Because of God's loving-kindness, we can receive all of life as a gift. While the world chases after all its values, we can receive all the gifts God gives us. When we look to receive those things God thinks are valuable, we will be rich. The Cretans chased after money and all the things money can buy. However, what they could not buy with money was God's loving-kindness, His earthly and eternal salvation, and peace. We see countries trying to make peace; but we know without the Prince of Peace Jesus, there can never be peace.

And one of those graces is peace. Now the word grace has a very Greek flavor to it. But peace has a strong Jewish flavor. Even though it is written in Greek, I'm sure Paul has the Jewish concept of Shalom in mind. For the Romans and Greeks, and for most modern cultures, peace simply means the absence of conflict. But for the Hebrew Shalom referred to my relationship with God no matter what circumstances I find myself in. It is the confidence to know that I am in a good relationship with God and He will never leave me nor forsake me ... not in this life or the next. Even as I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will not be afraid because God is with me. Paul was writing this letter after being released from prison; soon to be imprisoned again. He didn't know what he would have to face next, yet he had peace, joy, and contentment. The Cretans would never be able to receive and experience the peace of God as long as they chased after worldly values. You and I have a daily decision to make in life. We must decide whether to follow our culture's values just as the Christians in Crete had to make this same decision. Shall we chase and lust after money, power, celebrity, and pleasure; or shall we dedicate ourselves to seeking God and His Kingdom values; and leave our worldly status to Him? We can have peace and joy through it all. We can learn to be content. The answer for us is of course to trust in Jesus. The answer for the Cretan Christians is the same.

When we as a church and individuals find ourselves in an environment so hostile to Christ as the Cretans lived in and as we live in; good leadership that brings godly order, godly thinking, and godly actions to the congregation is extremely important. It is the leaders' duty to help the congregation to think and live according to Kingdom values.

I was going to try and preach the entire chapter 1 in one sermon; but I think it's much more important we get a feel for Paul, Titus, and Crete. We will spend more time on Crete next time. But for now, we have to remember this. **GOD HAS PRESENTED THE GOSPEL TO US IN AN ORDERLY, TIMELY, AND LOGICAL WAY.**

The world we live in, like the island of Crete in Paul's day, is spinning out of control. We live in a very chaotic and upside down world. Paul's goal was to help the churches in Crete to turn their world right side up. Good pastors and good church leaders help the congregation to see things right side up, which is from God's perspective. As I wrote this sermon, I could feel a heaviness come over me. I think about all the issues we face as a nation. I think about the fact that only

submitting to the Lordship of Jesus Christ can solve these problems. Sometimes in frustration I just throw my hands up in the air and sigh, "What's the use?" But then I thought a little more. Paul had much more to be pessimistic about than I do. I haven't been jailed. I don't think I'm going to be sent to prison and beheaded anytime soon. Paul doesn't waste his time fretting. He went to Crete in order to bring to those who would believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He sent Titus back and it seems as if Titus is ready to go. If Paul and Titus can do this, if the churches on the island of Crete could move forward in faith, so can I ... and so can you.

We do this by living out the truth and power of God's Kingdom in our everyday lives. IN ORDER TO REFLECT THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF GOD; OUR INDIVIDUAL LIVES AND THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH OUGHT TO BE ORDERLY AND NOT CHAOTIC.