**Counter Culture –** **Titus pt1 – To Lead or Not To Lead**

**He’s sitting on the beach (lawn chair) – waves are crashing. Just past the horizon 220mi is Athens - across from Ephesus. With rock mountains painting the landscape – once a thriving island of culture – after years of earthquakes and volcanoes – it is now a struggling port.**

**Titus is reading a letter from a mentor, spiritual father, and friend.**

**As he read, he knew things had to change… and he was the one called to do it – placed there – with God’s mission.**

**Even leaders and pastors need help and growth. It starts…**

**Titus 1:1 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, 2 in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began 3 and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior;**

**4 To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. 5 This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you…**

**Pretty typical of Paul – the writer, the reader, the reason.**

**But then he says more than most letters.**

**In 5 verses Paul drops some doctrinal reminders to Titus. Principles that the entire letter is built upon.**

**But first, a background check before we go through Paul’s opening.**

**Background Check**

**1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ**

* **Written by – The Apostle Paul**

**Paul calls himself two things - A servant & An apostle**

**\*\* A Servant of Jesus Christ - (doulos) – Slave of Jesus.**

**A servant of God – laying down my life for the cause of Christ.**

**\*\* An Apostle of Jesus Christ – delegated messenger of Jesus.**

**The Apostles were men appointed by Jesus to give his revealed word and truth. They speak and represent the words of Jesus.**

**Titus 1:4 To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.**

* **Written to – Titus (a Pastor)**

**A former missionary partner and church planter – current close friend. Often sent ahead to resolve conflict and establish church leadership.**

**“my true son in our common faith” - He was a Greek lead to Christ by Paul.**

**Titus traveled with Paul and spent time in Corinth & Philippi.**

**He was an early missionary to what is now Yugoslavia (aka. Serbia)**

**A very active early church father - Titus was now the overseer of all the Christian churches on the island of Crete.**

**Titus 1:5 The reason I left you in Crete (Suggests Paul was there for a while)**

* **Written to – Crete**

**(map) Titus is on Crete – a 160mi long / 35mi wide - rocky mt. Island.**

**A thriving island and growing church in a city of 300.000.**

**Crete’s reputation: Wild, lazy, lying sportsman. Alexander the Great, didn’t even want it. Filled with mercenaries and pirates.**

**Titus 1:5 The reason I left you in Crete (not mentioned in Acts - believed to be after his imprisonment in Acts – before his 2nd) was that you might put in order what was left unfinished…**

**This job is really hard – you are the man to do it!**

**Titus 1:1 Paul… (I am writing this) for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness…**

* **Written for – Encouragement – instruction – and answers.**

**They started the church together - Paul left Titus there to establish the leadership. There is still more to do – than just lead people to Christ.**

**\*\* The church was growing, and troubles were developing.**

**The NT church was exciting and chaotic. A time of fast growth, persecution and discrimination. Traveling preachers – some good / some are wolves. And they made their way to the island.**

**The letter addresses this.**

**Paul establishes Apostolic credentials. This was to be shared w/ other Churches. The intro insured the authority Titus needed to follow up.**

**\*\* This letter was and still is used as official church guidelines.**

**\*\*\* God loves organized churches.**

**People say I hate organized religion. Do you like disorganized religion? (Acts 13-14 – risked his life to set in leaders)**

**The pastoral letters of Paul (like this one) remind us that God does establish and organize church leadership in churches.**

**It is not supposed to be whatever goes with the flow.**

**Broken into 3 parts – Paul instructs Titus on:**

* **Ch 1 – Character & conduct of the Christian leaders in church**
* **Ch 2 – Character & conduct of Christians in church**
* **Ch 3 – Character & conduct of Christians w/ those outside church**

**Full of practical teaching & rich doctrine (fancy word for set of beliefs) It’s compact – to the point – and powerfully important.**

**Aging – Paul passes down leadership and instruction to Timothy (in Ephesus) and Titus (Crete). This is 1 of 3 pastoral letters.**

**Interestingly - No other book has as many references to Jesus as Savior than this one. 25% of NT occurrences are in Titus.**

**So, let’s dive into that intro – this is unique…**

**This greeting was longer than usual – tell us this is official apostolic business. A letter that was to be shared and passed around.**

**More than a personal letter to his friend Titus, this is from God.**

**Let’s read it again… Titus 1:1 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, 2 in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began 3 and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior;**

**It is filled with core theology that we are to be reminded of before we get to other businesses. Like 2 sides of a coin – the same passages give us 2 sides. The Believer / The Savior**

**The BELIEVER – Understanding our Salvation:**

**\*\*\* Election**

**(I am writing) “for the sake of the faith of God's elect…”**

* **God chose you; you did not choose him.**

**Some contest that elect is what the saved are called after salvation.**

**That negates the very meaning of the word - “to be chosen out”**

**Much like an election – the person elected is chosen from.**

**Election is not a post position – but a prechosen destination.**

**Jesus says – John 15:16 - You did not choose me, but I chose you**

**Ephesians 1:4-5 Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will… 11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will…**

**John 1:12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (Not man’s will – but God’s will)**

**Acts 13:48 - And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.**

**Romans 9:16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, (efforts) but on God, who has mercy.**

**2 Thessalonians 2:13 “But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.”**

**Ephesians 2:8 For by grace (God’s favor and undeserved kindness of salvtion) you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

**Saved by God’s favor - through faith - but even that faith is a gift of God. So no one can say they had a part in their salvation.**

**SO - Who are the elect? God decides. But we can identify them because they respond to the gospel and live their lives unto Christ.**

**\*\* God chose you; you did not choose him.**

**\*\*\* Redemption**

**“for the sake of the faith of God's elect…”**

* **God saved you; you did not save yourself.**

**\*\*\* Sanctification**

**“And their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness”**

* **God is maturing you; you cannot do it yourself.**

**Notice godliness follows - faith in Jesus and knowledge of the truth**

**We need to know what God says about life and practice.**

**You can’t practice – what you don’t know. Your spiritual growth in connected directly to your time in God’s word.**

**2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

**As we read the scriptures, the HS works in us conviction –**

**and what we believe shapes our actions and emotions**

**Orthodoxy (beliefs) and orthopraxy (practice)**

**\*\*\* Glorification**

**“in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began” (the hope of heaven)**

* **God will finish what he starts in you.**

**What he truly starts he will absolutely finish (Phil 1:6)**

**The subject of last week’s message. The greatest Hope.**

**We can all of these in Romans 8**

**Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29 For those (the before mentioned) God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. 31 What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? (The next part we broke down last week. God chose you and he will keep you to the end. Nothing can separate us from him – nothing can break the chain)**

* **This is known as the golden chain of redemption (Salvation)**

**This is the same group from start to finish. The exact same group of people - are foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified.**

**It is an unbreakable chain – one guarantees the next.**

**God will absolutely do the next link for those people.**

**That is why - v28, “we can know (as a fact) all things will in fact work for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. - Because the chain cannot be broken!**

**God does not simply influence our faith he guarantees our faith. God has not left the fate of our future in him to emotional fickle humans - he never breaks the chain.**

**How can we know this? Because God and his attributes.**

**2 sides of a coin.**

**The SAVIOR – Understanding Our GOD. God’s Attributes:**

**\*\*\* God is Omnipotent**

**“for the sake of the faith of God's elect… promised before the ages began”**

**The Lord is Almighty – all-powerful – and able to do all he wills to do. Sovereign in all things. What he wills is done.**

**“and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior”**

**\*\*\* Immutability**

**“for the sake of the faith of God's elect…”**

**For their sake – not his – he is self-sufficient.**

**“which God, who never lies, promised before the ages”**

**He never lies – does not change his mind – he will do what he says. He is faithful and reliable in all things.**

**\*\*\* Omni-benevolent**

**“for the sake of the faith of God's elect…”**

**For their sake… not his sake. God gave Grace and Mercy – when we did not deserve it – God is so good and kind!**

**\*\*\* Holiness**

**“Which accords with godliness”**

**God is calling his people to holiness for he is holy.**

**1 Peter 1:15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”**

**\*\*\* Omniscience**

**“and their knowledge of the truth”**

**Who holds all truth? Who gives all truth? – The LORD God.**

**Romans 11:33 - Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!**

**The Lord is perfect truth and knowledge – it is the truth of God that**

**Paul unpacks the riches and fullness of God’s knowledge and purpose for us.**

**\*\*\* Omnipresent – eternal**

**“in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began” “and at the proper time manifested in his word through preaching”**

**The eternal Lord God - in His perfect ordained timing – through the preaching of God’s word - saved us.**

**Galatians 1:15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles.**

**Paul says I was a hater of Christ, but at the just the right time – God saved me and entrusted me w/ being an Apostle of Christ.**

**Titus 1:3 …and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior…**

**Paul lays out his credentials - I am commissioned by Jesus to encourage the faith of those who are chosen by God to know Him.**

**Paul lays out some foundation truths and promises -**

**These are some serious foundational reminders in 4 verses.**

**What next is God’s plan for the church – next week.**

**How do we know what to look for in a church and pastor?**

**Paul’s authority is from almighty God**

**This little letter has God’s commands.**

**3 and which now at his a season he has brought to light (God plans are being made known) through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior. (I am to preach the truth of Jesus)**

**Pt 1- The Character and conduct of a Christian Leader**

**Titus 1:5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished – and appoint elders (not vote) in every town, as I directed you.**

**Elder = Spiritual overseers of a local church / to shepherd and lead the flock. \* Know this - it is God’s plan for a church to be organized and to have godly leadership and pastors. (I don’t like organized religion – then you don’t like the bible.**

**Our elders are… Ted, Tony, Mike, Stan, Randy (Sean)**

Qualification of an elder / **shepherd (Paul writes similar in 1 Tim 3)**

**Titus 1:6 An elder must be blameless (above reproach - does have questionable life – has a good reputation), faithful to his wife (also - husband of one wife),**

**Two controversial things about this:**

* **A man – Elders are to be men. Deacons (servant leader / ministry leaders / support pastors) can be men & women.**
* **One wife – Not an issue of having to be married (Paul was not) or divorce (pre-Jesus lives – divorce is not unforgivable sin)**

**Lit - one woman man. Issue of faithfulness & monogamy. Unfortunately, churches have divided over this.**

**a man whose children (children who live in your household) believe (who are faithful) and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.**

**Serious issue with some today - wild PK reputation.**

**Paul says in 1 Tim 3:4 An elder must manage his own family well and see that his children obey, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. 5 If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?**

**If my family was not in order…**

**Ministers should understand that family is mission #1**

**Selecting elders is not about a PHD, business success, wealth, or age. The first thing Paul says, "How do they look at home and in society?” What is there reputation? Are they leading their family well?"**

**Titus 1:7 Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless (above accusation)- not overbearing (arrogant, pushy, self-absorbed), not quick-tempered (handles stress well, not easily angered. Shepherds the sheep – you don’t punch them I the neck), not given to drunkenness (does not get drunk, no drinking problem), not violent (not looking for a fight - bully), not pursuing dishonest gain (greedy for money, makes money dishonestly. 1 Tim 3 - not a lover of money) 8 Rather, he must be hospitable (loves strangers, a gracious person), one who loves what is good (what God says is good), who is self-controlled (sound mind – keeps calm under pressure), upright, holy and disciplined. (They live a holy disciplined lifestyle)**

**Paul is saying – look at their character – look at their home.**

**And then – look at their theology – what we believe matters!**

**9 He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught (knows and holds tightly the truth of Jesus Christ and is not swayed - no compromise), so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. (lit. those who contradict it) 1 Tim 3:2 – be able to teach – a love for the truth)**

**An elder is not just a good person – but someone who knows and protects the flock from the lies of spiritual wolves.**

**They are to both encourage and correct the sheep.**

**Over all a shepherd / elder – is one who patiently, gently, guides and leads the family of God in the truth and mission of God.**

**That is what to expect and look for from church leadership**

**A serious issue in Crete – Paul addresses why elders are needed:**

**Dealing with tough issues**

**Titus 1:10 For there are many rebellious people (insubordinate to the teachings of the apostles), full of meaningless talk and deception, (teach lies) especially those of the circumcision group. (Judaizers – you must follow Jewish customs to follower of Jesus - not the only problem, but one of them) 11 They must be silenced (do not let them teach), because they are disrupting whole households (causing division) by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. (self-promoting - using people for their own advantage)**

**12 One of Crete’s own prophets has said it: “Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.” 13 This saying is true. (many of the pagan people of Crete had little moral compass) Therefore rebuke them sharply, (Don’t let them get away with it – confront them personally - why?) so that they will be sound in the faith (the purpose is - getting them on the right track)14 and will pay no attention to Jewish myths (referring to Judaizers teachings) or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth. (don’t be scared of what they say – confront them)**

**Paul then says something hard to understand – Titus 1:15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.**

**A person free in Jesus is made pure by Jesus, not by our actions.**

**A person apart from Jesus – their thinking is upside down. To them purity is about restrictions and regulations.**

**Basically – don’t listen to them in regards to Jesus, even if they have a little bit that’s right. A little corruption is still corrupt. It’s contaminated words. The mixture of truth and lies equal lies. Illus – water with just a little dirt / poison (sand) – is still undrinkable. Doctrine matters!**

**Titus 1:16 They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good. (ie. counterfeit coins) Titus 2:1 You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine.**

**Again - an elder is not just a good person – but someone who knows and protects the flock from the lies of spiritual wolves.**

**They are to both encourage and correct the sheep.**

**I want to wrap up pt 1 of Titus with -** The Big Thoughts of Chapter 1

1. **We should - Never take church leadership lightly**

* **The desire to be a church leader– is a heavy burden**

**1 Peter 5:1 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2 Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; (no one should be in a position out of obligation) not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; (At the heart is servanthood** **Mark 10:42-45) 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.**

* **Leadership is not just doing stuff, but speaking into your life**

**Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. / 17 Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.**

**The importance of submission to church leadership**

* **Be careful and mindful of who you pick as leader**

**1 Tim 3:1 Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. (Paul then gives Tim a similar list that he gave Titus - then) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.**

**There is to be accountability and a measure of expectations for us – the qualifications are not suggestions or goals - they are requirements; to insure that church abuses, misuses, and deception are avoided.**

**Held accountable with our families and our personal life - How can you do that unless you know me? Some leaders are too distant from their people to be held accountable.**

* **Those that are in church leadership should be valued**

**Eph 5:11-12 – God gives leadership as a gift to the church**

**1 Corinthians 16:15 You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord’s people. I urge you, brothers and sisters, 16 to submit to such people and to everyone who joins in the work and labors at it. 18 For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.**

**Valued and respected for their time, sacrifices, and calling – Very few pastors feel appreciated – they hang on by a thread**

**1 Thes 5:12** **Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. 13 Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.**

1. **Leadership guidelines are your goals**

**These are the elder qualifications: Good reputation, faithful to spouse, consistent with your kids, servant’s heart, puts others before himself, humble, patient, self-control, generous, gracious, disciplined, knows and hold faithfully the gospel of Jesus Christ and knows how to share it. (sounds like the fruit of the Spirit – Gal 5)**

**These are not standards we expect only for them to live by – these are areas of maturity we are all to live by.**

**They are not just requirements for elders: they're requirements for all Christians - and the reason you can't be an elder if you don't meet these is that you're not walking as you should as a Christian. These are requirements for all of us. This is about spiritual maturity.**

1. **There are wolves out there**

**Many of the NT letter deal with this – the reality of the spiritual wolf**

**Jesus - Matt7:15 Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. / Luke 10:3 - Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. / Phil 3:2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of false teachers. / Col 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through empty philosophy and vain deceit… / 2 Cor 11:13For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.… (Gal 2-3, Phil 1-3, 2 Pet 2:1)**

**Acts 20:30Even from your own number, men will rise up and distort the truth to draw away disciples after them. 31Therefore be alert and remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.**

**Elders are to protect and guide the sheep thru the brush - from false teaching and selfish actions of others.**

1. **Confrontation is hard but necessary**

**It’s never easy – but must be done - and restored if possible**

**Titus 1:11 They must be silenced… 13 Therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith… (Mentioned often by Apostles & Jesus - Matt 18)**

**The leaders of the church – and people in the church need to be willing to address the issues that are bringing confusion and division in the body of Christ. The goal is to restore.**

1. **The purpose of the church is to introduce people to Jesus and help them to grow mature in Jesus – Don’t be swayed.**

**This goes back to Paul’s intro -Titus 1:1 (I am writing to you) … to further (help us mature in…) the faith of God’s elect (our reliance on Jesus) and their knowledge of the truth (our understanding of Jesus) that leads to godliness (our walk with Jesus) 2 in the hope of eternal life, (the promise of Jesus) which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time… 3 …through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior. (Jesus)**

**Everything - we do (as a church) is to be about helping you further in the faith (develop maturity) and to preach the good news to those who have not heard! Being like Jesus to those around us everywhere we go.**

**Doing everything we can to help you meet Jesus and growth I truth and godliness. We cannot be sidetracked by other things…**

* **So I ask you today – where are you with Jesus?**

1. **True gospel beliefs precede a true gospel behavior.**

**Again and again Paul tells us in this in this letter.**

**They go hand in hand – we will see this again in the next 2 chapters.**