

Titus 24-07-07b

We have seen the introduction to the letter of Paul to Titus and the overall outline. We're going to see that the substance that we anticipate by looking at that overview and that structural observation is going to be borne out in the introduction. It's very interesting to see how Paul introduces his various letters.

Because we have the collection of letters in the New Testament, we find that this is the third longest out of all of Paul's letters. Only two letters have a longer introduction than this, one of which is Romans, which you would expect, and the other is Galatians. Romans has 93 words of introduction, Galatians has 75, Titus comes in a close third at 65 words.

This entire set of four verses is all the introduction. And this interests me because Paul has recently spent weeks, if not months, with Titus traveling all over the island of Crete in this ministry effort. And when you've recently spent a lot of time with someone, you think, well, hey Titus, let's just dive right in.

But Paul takes his time laying a foundation under the substance and primary body content of this letter. And so he begins, Paul, a bond servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. Why both things? Well, this resembles Romans, again, not only in terms of its length, but also in terms of the phraseology.

In Romans 1.1, Paul says, Paul, a bond servant of Jesus Christ, called an apostle, separated to the gospel of God, which he promised before through his prophets in the holy scriptures. Similarly, here we have Paul, a bond servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. What is the difference between those two concepts and which one comes first? You almost get the idea that the apostleship flows out of the relationship of service.

So *doulos* is the word here for bond servant, and it is basically slave. It is the common use, a common term, a servant sort of elevates it. But when you're talking about the slaves, you're talking about the *douloi*.

And you can review the history of that word. But what does it mean in the New Testament sense? It draws its meaning from the secular usage. And so you find Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6. You remember him saying, no one can serve two masters.

Either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve, and this is the verbal form, you cannot *doulo* God and mammon, serve. So this is the idea that there is a master with absolute authority, and that's what is primarily in view here.

Paul is serving as an apostle and he is writing these letters, which turn out to be inspired

by the Holy Spirit under the authority of God. He doesn't say here that he is a bond servant of Jesus Christ. He says he is a bond servant of God.

And this is a reminder to us that unlike in Romans, where he says a bond servant of Jesus Christ called an apostle, it is the unified will and purpose of God that we recognize the authority that flows from God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ to the apostles who bear witness to this word. People have wanted to try to expand, extend, and sort of accrue to themselves this authority. And nowhere more famously than the Catholic church, but the authority that resides with God the Father and is given to the Lord Jesus.

Remember one of the last things he says on this earth is, all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. All authority has been given to me. So when the Lord Jesus Christ appears on the Damascus road and calls Saul to become the apostle Paul, that authority is directly received from the Father.

These letters disputed by scholarship, though they may be, are authoritative. This is a word from God. And think about this.

If this was really spurious, if it was sued epigraphical, if it was written by somebody in Paul's name, and it was just a later effort to try to exhort the church, our father in heaven would not see us coming for bread in his word and allow us to end up with a rock or a snake or a scorpion, the spurious letters. And if you're watching the chosen, those people recently depicted Mary Magdalene, they have flashbacks to the days of David or the days of Abraham that introduced some of their episodes. And they had a flash forward in one of these recent ones where Matthew is old and has grown a beard and he comes to visit Mary Magdalene and give her something.

I forget the circumstance, but some kind of way. Oh, I know Matthew brings her his completed gospel, this great big folio book. And I'm a little bit unsure that the book had been invented in Matthew's day.

I think they were still using scrolls. Anyway, he comes with this big book. And you can look that up and find out when they started chopping up scrolls and binding one edge.

But he brings this ginormous book and dumps it in Mary Magdalene's lap and says, well, I finally finished. And she says, oh, joy, it's all done. She says, I've been writing a bit myself.

And so then she gives out with a fictional poem that somebody wrote for the show. But people who are curious say, well, I think I've heard that there are some writings by Mary Magdalene. And so you go and look and sure enough, there is this apocryphal gospel of Mary Magdalene that has survived in fragments.

And it is some of the most hair raising, you know, eye watering, skin withering, let me

run out of here material that you could imagine. These things were weeded out for a reason. You have all of these modern scholars and authors who say, oh, boo on Constantine because he gathered all of these apocryphal gospels up and had them burned.

And he decided what was in the canon. No, it had been known for centuries what was inspired and what was not. All the people did in Constantine's day was say, you know what? I'm tired of this trash, getting people confused.

Let's gather it up and let people clearly know what the church has recognized from apostolic days as inspired authoritative from an apostle or an associate of an apostle and what is not. And, you know, the acts of Peter and the gospel of Judas and the machinations of Mary Magdalene and, you know, all of these other things where Jesus is a little boy and he's making doves out of mud and then, you know, burning his little childhood playmates out of existence and all of this other weird, weird stuff was expunged. It had long been recognized.

It is not hard to tell. And to resurrect this idea that what has survived for the last 2000 years is somehow not inspired, not profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness is the purest organic fertilizer you can get. You can grow tomatoes with that idea.

This is the inspired word of God and it is important. And when Paul identifies himself as a *doulos*, a bond servant of God, this means he is writing and acting and operating under the authority of the God who gives life to all things, the creator God of the universe who sent his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to bear witness to the truth and to commission apostles such as Paul and John and Peter and their associates. And I take that thunder as God's affirmation that what we are saying is true.

So there is no question that first and second Timothy and Titus are inspired and authoritative. And Paul tells Titus, before you get 10 words into this, that this is delivered. These policies, these exhortations, these warnings and encouragements are given by God's authority at God's behest to accomplish God's purposes.

So it's not just Pamela. It's not like when we say, you know, sincerely yours, Sam Hall at the bottom of a letter, those greetings were given at the beginning. And Paul doesn't say sincerely yours, Paul.

He says, I'm writing according to the will and authority of God in heaven and the Lord Jesus Christ. So when you compare this greeting with the one in Romans, you see that that authority is identical. God's authority was given to Jesus Christ, who has commissioned and authorized Paul to communicate these truths.

Bond servant of God, what is the application for you and me? Do you realize that the

authoritative word of truth that has been communicated to us authorizes and commissions us to live in its light? How important is it when God the father through Jesus Christ and the inspired apostolic witness and record exhorts commands demands that we live in a certain way that we reflect the light of truth in our lives. It has the same authority as the apostle Paul writing this letter, which is all authority, the authority of Jesus Christ. This is not a small thing.

It's not a hobby. It's not a pastime. It's not a, you know, nice to do once in a while life to lead.

Look at the career of the apostle Paul. What part of his life after the Damascus road was not dedicated to fulfilling his commission? He look at the list of his tribulations. He's stoned and left for dead.

He's imprisoned. He's beaten. He gets the 40 stripes minus one on three different occasions.

He is shipwrecked. He is chased down. He is opposed.

He's hounded. He's abused. He is ill spoken of in groups.

He will come and preach and teach and build a group, leave people, come in afterward and disparage him and attack him and character assassinate him, mock him for his weakness in presence and so on. And he endures all of that. He says, I have daily care for the churches.

Should we do any less? Are we part time believers? Are we part time servants? Can you imagine a slave, a do loss in the ancient world? There was sort of a part time slave, but would go off and leave the master's house for hours or days at a time and go engage in his own pursuits and then wander back and expect a pat on the head and well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou good and faithful slave. You're not going to get a well done if half the time or more you're on your own time doing your own agenda. We should be as full time in the living out of these truths as the apostle Paul was in faithfully communicating them and exemplifying them, exhorting, encouraging and building them into group after group after group as he traveled in the ancient Mediterranean world.

A bond servant of God. Can we say this about ourselves? Can we look in the mirror and say, see that guy, that gal right there, bond servant of God, slave of God, fully dedicated, doing God's word and God's will to the maximum possible. If we can't, something needs to change because we should.

Don't gloss over this first verse. Fill in your name here, a bond servant of God and a commissioned one by Jesus Christ. Paul is a commissioned apostle.

I am not an apostle, but I am just as commissioned. We learned this in first Timothy,

didn't we? Remember the gift that was recognized with the laying on of hands. You have been appointed, you have been destined, you have been assigned opportunities.

You have a spiritual gift that is designed to function for the benefit of others. You are to be in contact with others so that you receive and are built up and equipped for service by the gifts of others, not just the teaching gift of an elder or a pastor, but everybody. The body builds itself up.

Remember Ephesians chapter four, the whole body is built up in love. Well, we're built up for a purpose. The body doesn't just sit in a chair and watch TV.

The body does things. Once it is strong, once it is skilled, once it is equipped and guided properly by the head, it accomplishes God's purpose and God's will. You are a bond servant of God.

I am a bond servant of God. You are commissioned to fulfill specific functions, to seize and exploit opportunities, to live in the light of the power of God's Spirit and the guiding, shining light of His word. That is the only reason we're here.

God's got a world full of people who don't know who they are or why they're here or what the potential is. There are enough people like that. How many of us can remember to be bond servants of God and commissioned ones in His service? An apostle of Jesus Christ, God and Jesus Christ, the authority is equal.

You can swap those. He could be a bond servant of Jesus Christ and an apostle of God because the Trinity is united in its purpose and united in its function, just as the body of Christ should be. What is the standard that guides? What are the guardrails? What are the limits? What is the extent? Where are the shoulders of the narrow road on which we are to travel and heading for the destination of the straight gate? According to the faith of God's chosen ones, the faith of God's called elect.

This is called. There is an appeal. There is a mission to which we are called and we fulfill that mission in and by faith.

We are guided by faith. We believe the truth. We don't let somebody tell us the truth is not the truth and a letter of Paul is not a letter of Paul and it should be dismissed.

Titus is one of the most ignored books of the New Testament in the modern day. It is almost entirely overlooked by scholarship and has been for the last 40 to 50 years because somebody back in the 1960s published an article and two or three other guys piled on and said, this is a spurious book. It's not really Paul.

So ignore it. You know that when the enemy targets something for dismissal, when it is discredited, I'm going to have 51 scholars sign a letter saying that this is not really Paul talking. Therefore it can be safely ignored.

That is probably actually a very important truth. If Satan goes to all the trouble to try to get people to not read this book, it probably has some really important truth for us. And as I say, I am with Martin Luther when he says everything you need to know for Christian faith and practice is in here.

So why wouldn't the enemy seek to dismiss it? It's important. And Paul front loads the authority for this content and this message as a bond servant of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's chosen ones, God's called ones. We are called and chosen in by through and for faith, our calling and our election, our commission, our purpose, our reason for being.

We are all about to take one more breath. Our heart is going to beat a couple of times. Why? To fulfill these purposes.

And for no other reason, every breath we take and every heartbeat we experience where we are not living out these truths is waste. We are not redeeming the time. We've got to pay attention to who we are and why we're here.

It doesn't matter what the mundane tasks are. It doesn't matter how seemingly insignificant the time is that we are spending, but we're sitting in a chair watching the news. We've got something to fix.

We've got something to fold. We've got something to clean. We've got something to organize.

We've got something to put away, got to make a bed, got to transfer the laundry from the washer to the dryer. All of those seemingly minor and mundane tasks can be done dedicated to God. If I'm going to fold this, I'm doing what I do heartily as unto the Lord.

I'm fulfilling a function. I am supporting my household, whether it's myself or others, so that I have clothes to wear, towels to use, silverware to employ, so that we can operate in the world effectively. These are support functions.

It's beans and bullets. It's not all on the front line, pulling a trigger, reloading magazines, sending rounds downrange out of howitzers and machine guns. Most of a military force is support, service and support, without which the frontline stuff cannot happen.

And anybody who slacks off making sure that the larder is stocked, that the troops have good chow available and plenty of ammunition available, if you slack off in that, people at the end of the spear wind up with no support, and that spear is going to fall to the ground. Everything we do should be dedicated to the Lord. We should have one eye on, I know this is mundane and repetitive, but God's got a purpose in it, or He wouldn't have me here doing it.

I'd be a missionary in Borneo or West Java or somewhere. But I am here. This is my

function.

I am going to do it because God put me here. This is my opportunity to glorify Him in that which is least, that which seems insignificant. But I do it fully.

I do it carefully. I do it joyfully. I do it without complaining.

And while I'm doing it, I can think about my role in God's plan and purpose, what I anticipate in the eternal future. You know, some of us, everybody's wearing white robes. I wonder if somebody's got to wash those robes in the millennial kingdom.

Would you be willing to be a robe washer if that was the calling, if that was the assignment? Be the best doggone fuller in the world. You want these things white? They can't be any whiter. So, according to the faith of God's called, and notice the emphasis we closed 1 Timothy with, acknowledgment of the truth.

Don't be fooled. It's not about, look at the immorality of the Cretans. Let's go down and see if we can shut down the brothels and the houses of prostitution and the bars and the idol sellers and the idol worship and these shameless pirates and Cretans who all they want to do is defraud one another for their own personal gain and profit.

Let's go out on a big social crusade. How do you exist? How do you thrive? How do you counteract and oppose the Cretan culture? Through faith and acknowledgment of the truth that accords with godliness. You're going to be a contrast.

You're going to exemplify a difference by living your own life according to a completely different set of standards with a completely different purpose. Theirs is earthly and self-centered. Ours is selfless and divine.

It is sacrificial to self. It is beneficial to others. It is all the things that love is described as being in 1 Corinthians 13.

That is our purpose. We don't prevail by going out and jousting with a fallen immoral culture directly. We prevail by fulfilling God's commission, God's calling, according to God's truth, which is contained in this book.

The truth which accords with godliness. I'm not trying to foist my godliness on others. I'm not out there rabble-rousing to get them to quit being ungodly.

I am going to concentrate on me, myself, and I and those over whom I have any sort of influence. We will be godly. We draw.

We do not push. We invite. We do not attack.

Jesus said, if I be lifted up, I will raise the scepter from the cross, and I will break in pieces like a potter's. No, I will draw all men to myself. No man can come to me except

the Father draws him, doesn't say, beats him into submission, coerces, forces, nags, criticizes, berates, belittles.

We draw. We invite. What is the reason for the hope that is in you? I want to escape what I am in, and I want to dwell where you dwell.

That's the counterintuitive means of preaching the gospel. The truth which accords with godliness. Verse two, in hope of eternal life.

We do it because we know that it isn't a matter of dominating, prevailing, overcoming, and wreaking change and social justice in this life. We have the hope of eternal life. That's what we expect and look forward to.

We travail in school. We take tests. We write papers.

We study. We try to cram information into our brain. Not because we plan on strutting around the school as an A student.

That's a very short-sighted, short-term success. One of these days, you're going to leave school. Nobody cares what your grades were.

Can you do the job? Are you equipped? Are you proficient? Are you desirable? Are you skillful? Are you efficient? Are you productive? Are you fruitful? Are you a person who has taken that knowledge on board, and now we want to hire you, and we'll pay you extra because you are really, really good at this? What we do, we do with the hope of eternal life. I want to be useful to the master in the future. I want to be faithful now in that which is least.

If I am faithful in a few things, I will be given opportunities over many things. Wouldn't it be great to be qualified, to walk with the Lord Jesus in white, to sit with him on his throne, to be a pillar in the temple of God, to partake of the hidden manna, to have the white stone, the new name, all of those wonderful overcomer blessings that are not automatic with salvation, but recognizing that taking the pop quizzes, writing the term papers, studying for the quizzes and the tests, mastering the material, boring and, well, I've never used geometry once I graduated school. All of this American history, all of these things I had to learn, home economics, and why did I study all of those things? They weren't immediately useful to me.

The skill of learning and mastering material, of teaching ourselves to be diligent, to plan ahead, to take whatever is given to us on board, observe it, interpret it, and apply it, that skill is developed. Those muscles are formed, the pattern of time management and self-discipline and reading requirements thoroughly and doing exactly what is asked of us, no more and no less, the material is grist for that mill in a lot of cases. I don't necessarily need to know ancient history, although you'd be surprised, you wind up doing what I do, and those ancient history classes, even though I didn't get good grades in them, have

served me quite well.

Being an English major, I didn't even like English, but God knew better than me that these would be useful for His purposes later on. So we, in faith and in expectation that there is a reason and a purpose for this activity and these requirements that don't make sense to me in all cases now, but I have faith, I have hope. And you notice we're getting that triad of Christian virtues reflected here, the faith of God's elect, the hope of eternal life in verse 2, which God, who cannot lie.

Crete is rife with deception, just as Ephesus was populated by deceivers and deceptions and fables and old wives' tales and narratives that don't reflect truth and aren't useful to God's people for God's purposes in anticipation of God's future kingdom and life. God, who cannot lie, promised eternal life. We're going to see next time this next phrase, before time began.

This is not the only place Paul uses it. It's one of those that kind of slips under the radar. But think about this, just muse on it for a moment.

God promised eternal life before time began. Really? We weren't around. We're trapped in time.

We live in time. We're born in time. We die in time.

But God made a promise of eternal life before time began. Why does Paul need to include this? If you left it out, would you miss it? The hope of eternal life, which God has promised, promised before time began, verse 3, but has in due time manifested his word through preaching. It is the word of truth.

It is the communication of truth that is paramount. It is all important. And if the communication of it is primary, it is the means of revelation of eternal life.

It was promised before there were people, before there was time, before there was a world, before there were the six days of creation, eternal life was promised. So we'll get into this next time. But if you make a promise, you got to be talking to somebody, right? Promised before time began, but has in due time, in the proper time, in God's time, the right time in history.

People who say life is all about the Sermon on the Mount. My question to them is, so what about all the poor slobs who lived before Jesus' day? You say that the law was no good, and Jesus supersedes the law, transcends the law, redefines the law, gives the law of love and the Mosaic law. So what was happening all throughout the Old Testament age? What happened between Adam and Christ? Are those people just out of luck? Because why didn't Jesus come as soon as Adam and Eve walked out the garden? Why isn't Jesus waiting on them and saying, well, I know you're depressed, can't get to the beauty inside the garden, but here I am.

And sit down here, I'm going to preach you a little Matthew 5 through 7 message, and it would be available for everybody. Why is it revealed when it is revealed? And this is emphasized over and over again in the New Testament, that in due time, Christ died for the ungodly. In due time, God, who cannot lie, manifested His word through preaching.

And notice the chain of custody here. Paul, a bondservant of God and apostle of Jesus Christ, God manifested His word through preaching, committed to me according to the commandment of God, our Savior. So this study that we are about to undertake, as with all scripture, which is God-breathed and profitable, alive and powerful, the sharpest sword there is, doesn't just cut the physical, it cuts the spiritual, gets to the thoughts and intents of the heart so that they can be corrected.

If you ever watch medical shows, whether they're realistic or fictional, sooner or later, somebody's doing surgery. And to fix a problem, what do they do? They've got to cut the patient open. They've got to peel away the layers.

They've got to get down to whatever it is that is the issue. And those scalpels are as sharp as they come. And I've used this illustration many times, but if somebody were to come up to you and you've got a sick child and you're grieving over them, they're withering away, there's something wrong.

And someone says, let me take your child and I'm going to slice them open with a knife. They're going to bleed profusely. It's going to hurt.

I'm going to cut your child open with this shiny, sharp knife. People would be horrified until you explain, I'm a surgeon. And when I cut your child open and when I expose and remove or repair the problem, I'm going to close it back up.

They are going to heal by God's grace and they are going to be restored and renewed and functional and productive once again. And you will enjoy their presence for time to come. People reject the word of God because they don't like its surgical power.

And yet the surgery is necessary to remove the problems inside us so that we can be healed, so that we can be restored to function, so that we can serve God and accomplish His purposes and be a blessing and benefit to one another and shine the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ to others who will be drawn to that light, drawn by that light, not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to His mercy, He delivers us. And through us, He will draw and deliver others. But there is a necessary focus on the truth.

This is the sharp scalpel that gets in where the problem is and puts the healing power of God in there to fix it. And without the word, all of the other efforts, you know, do you want to try to do rehabilitation when the problem has not been removed? Well, let me, let me, I know you've got stiffness. I know you've got, you know, this arm hurts, but let

me palpitate it and let me exercise it.

You haven't fixed the break. You can't do it. And this is what so much of Christianity is trying to do today is rehabilitate society and rehabilitate people.

And the problem inside has not been solved and only the word of God can solve it. That's why 1st Timothy, Titus, 2nd Timothy, all focus, as much as any book in the Bible, on God's truth. It is the only power on earth that in the hands of the Holy Spirit can fix, renew, and restore.

We have to be people of truth, living in the truth, the pillar and ground of the truth in our fellowship. It is the word of God. It is the truth of God, wholesome words.

And that's why there is an almost equal emphasis in this letter on exposing and purging non-truth, that which purports to be truth and is not. You want a guy going in there with a rusty pocket knife, saying that he can fix the problem? Unguided, unknowledgeable. I know if I slice around, you might as well be a prophet of Baal.

I'll just hack myself and the problem will be solved. That's what non-truth does. It is destructive, not constructive.

It is unguided. It is unprofitable. It is the opposite of everything the word of God is.

And it has to be identified. It has to be called out. We're going to see a strong exhortation that elders in the church have to expose, call out and expunge error.

It cannot be tolerated. You can't go along to get along. It is metastasizing cancer.

And if you don't cut it out and remove it, it will destroy the body. Very powerful exhortations we'll see coming up. But we are people of the truth.

That's why we come to Bible class. That's why we write it down and we think about it and we pray over it and we examine ourselves to see if we are walking in that light and according to that truth, according to the faith of God's chosen and called ones, acknowledgement of the truth, which accords with godliness. That's our function.

That's our purpose. It's the only reason God gives us another breath and another heartbeat. How important is it? We'll find out as we move forward through this wonderful letter to Titus that we will continue in next time.

We'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the manna from heaven that is found in your word, the presence and power of your spirit to enable us to digest it, to metabolize it, to put it into a useful form in our thinking, in our motivations, in our actions. We pray that as we recognize our assignment in this world and in this life, that God, the Holy Spirit, will use these truths to illuminate our path so that we can walk by means of the spirit.

We can walk in the light of your word. We can have fellowship with you and you with us and continue to be cleansed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, purified, thoroughly equipped for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.