

Titus 24-07-10b

We resume our investigations here in the early part of the first chapter of Titus, and we are taking a moment to understand why in so many of the epistles, as well as in the teaching ministry of the Lord Jesus, we have references to slaves and to slavery, and what it means for us as we view ourselves. There are times when we say, well, I'm royal family. I'm a child of the king.

I've got privileges. I can go right into the throne room and sit on my heavenly father's knee and tell him my problems. And we are ready to revel in those pictures in the Bible that tell us of our privilege and the things that we have in Christ, all of which is true, but it is balanced by recognition that we are beholden to the Lord in heaven, who is the master, and we are to serve and to recognize our responsibility for service.

What is the nature of that service? We have seen those aspects that are depicted by the verb *douleo* and the noun *doulos* in terms of the emphasis on relationship to the master, being bound to the master, having the idea of humility as a result, recognizing that there is a master who is in charge and what he says goes, having the notions of obedience and commitment and reflecting the character of the master, representing him and his interests and accomplishing his purposes. The next word that is used in the New Testament is *thereupon*, not *thereupon*, which is an adverb, but *thereupon*, T-H-E-R-A-P-O-N. And Hebrews 3.5, this is the place where we have *thereupon*.

And that's the only place, it's a hoppop in the New Testament. So that is the second kind of servant, Moses, as God's proxy, God's steward, if you will, in and for Israel. That's our second word.

The third one is *diakonos*, where we get deacon. You're familiar with this. Trench thinks that this comes from the verb *dioko*.

Dioko means to chase, to pursue, to hasten after something. And Trench comparing *diakonos* to the first two, *doulos* and *thereupon*, says the difference between *diakonos* on one side and *doulos* and *thereupon* on the other, is this. *Diakonos* represents the servant in his activity for the work, not in his relation.

Remember, being bound was the *doulos* idea. And not in the sense of being more of a voluntary representative or steward that you find with *thereupon* to a person. The attendance at a feast with no respect to their condition as free or servile are *diakono*i.

So in John chapter two, verse five, when Jesus goes to the wedding feast at Cana and they run out of wine and he says, woman, what is there between you and me? My hour has not yet come. She, Mary turns to the *diakono*i that are there to put on the wedding. They're not *douloi*, they're not abject slaves.

Of course, they're not a thereupon, but they are there to serve. These are the waitstaff, those who attend to the needs of the guests, but there's no indication of whether they are slave or free. Are they relatives who want to be sure that the bride and groom have a wonderful wedding feast? There's no emphasis on how do they relate to authority, to servitude, to slavery.

They are those who are defined by their function. They are those who are seeing to the needs of the guests. And so Mary turns to them in John chapter two, verse five, Jesus' mother said to the diakonoi, whatever he says to you, do.

It's all about the function. Diakonos is about what do you get done? What is the service that you perform and how well do you do it? Same thing in Matthew 22, verse 13, the parable of the wedding guest. Remember the king wants to have a feast for his son and he brings everyone in and they all have wedding garments on that the king has provided.

But one guy comes in and doesn't have on the garment. And the king says, friend, why aren't you wearing the garment? And the guy has no reply. So then the king said to the diakonoi, those who are, again, the waitstaff, those who are dedicated to the service and comfort and a good experience of the guests.

He said to the servants, to the diakonoi, bind him hand and foot, take him away, cast him into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. He's not going to like it.

Take him anyway. His objections are overruled before he makes them. But the diakonoi, because we're not talking about what kind of slave are they? We're talking about what function are they going to perform? And for the good of those who are at the feast, for the king, for the bride, for the groom, these individuals fulfill their service.

And you can compare this with John chapter 12, verse two, when Jesus is at the house of Lazarus and Mary and Martha, and they made Jesus a supper. Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with him. Martha served.

She did a deacon function. She's manifestly a lady of the house. She is by no means a douloi, a doulos, or one of the douloi.

So the importance of preserving the distinction between doulos and diakonos can be illustrated from the parable of the marriage supper in Matthew 22, verses two through 14. So the king's servants bring in the invited guests in verse three, verse four, verse eight, and verse 10. And his servants are also bidden to cast out the guest that is without the wedding garment in verse 13.

But the ones who brought the people in were the douloi. In verse three, verse four, verse eight, and verse 10, the slaves go and bring in those who are called to the feast. But the

ones who fulfill the sentence to cast the poorly garbed man into the outer darkness are diakonos.

It's a real distinction, and it goes to the essentials of the parable. The douloi are people, men. We are douloi.

Paul is a doulos guest as well. And the point of this parable is that it's communicating the invitation, communicating the message, giving the opportunity for people to respond. And even when they are told to compel people to come in, people have a choice to refuse.

He says, you know, make the strongest case you can. When it says compel, it doesn't say force. It says, you know, do everything you can to persuade.

And so the application here is that the Deuloi are ambassadors of Christ who invite their fellow men into his kingdom now. The Diakonoι are the angels who in the judgment act at the end of the world to appear and execute judgment. So the Diakonos represents the servant in his activity for the work he is to do.

This is one who executes the commands of another, especially of a master. So you have this in Matthew 20, 26, when he says the people in the world lorded over one another and tried to be the boss. He says, yet it shall not be so among you, but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.

Think about this now, what word would you expect? If anyone wants to be great among you, let him be your servant. What word do you suppose that is? Are you to be an enslaved person defined by your relationship to the one you are serving? No, the emphasis is on your act of service. So this is Diakonos.

If anyone wants to be great and respected among you, let him concentrate on service. Diakonos. And in so doing, he's actually serving the Lord as he renders acts of service to fellow believers.

In Mark 9, verse 35, you have the same idea. Jesus sat down, called the 12 and said to them, if anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all. And this is not a judgment.

This is, if you want to be first, this is how you should be first. Be last of all. Remember, don't take the fancy seat at a feast.

Sit down at the end and wait to be invited up. Don't try to promote yourself. If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and Diakonos of all.

Focused on the wellbeing. Be the waitstaff. Ask if there's anything they need.

Can I refill your cup? Can I bring you seconds? Would you like dessert? Here's your

check. Mark 10, verse 43. Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your Diakonos.

Anytime things are repeated across the gospels, it's for emphasis. It's important. And again, at the wedding feast, I mentioned John 2, 5, where Mary says to the Diakonoι, whatever he says to you, do it.

But in verse nine of that same chapter, when the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, it did not know where it came from, but the Diakonoι who had drawn the water knew. The master of the feast called the bridegroom. Why have you saved the best till last? But notice that the Diakonoι drew the water and put the water into the jugs.

And this wasn't a slavery function. This was a service function. We're serving the guests and that's our focus.

That's our mission. In John 12, 26, Jesus says, if anyone serves me, let him follow me. And where I am there, my Diakonos will be also.

If anyone serves me, him, my father will honor. And the focus is not doing it grudgingly or out of necessity, but recognizing that it is an opportunity to serve and to be of benefit to the one we serve. It's not out of master-slave relationship.

It is out of concern for the benefit of the one being served. That's the focus of Diakonos. And you think about deacons in a church, why are they there? To ensure that everyone's needs are met.

This is why Stephen and the other men were designated to be deacons so that the apostles could concentrate on studying and teaching and let the service ensuring that everyone received maximum benefit in the distribution and so on. That was a deacon function. They weren't slaves.

They weren't therapists. They weren't therapists where they're defined more by their relationship to the occasion or to the nation of Israel in the case of Moses. Here, it's all about the service.

Many different people can perform a service. The focus is, does the service get done and get done well? So many places. And again, if you really want to go in depth, you can go to each of the passages in the New Testament, just get a concordance and look them up.

Romans 13, four. Remember Romans 13? We just saw this in first Timothy about the government and those who were in civil authority. He is God's minister to you for good.

But if you do evil, be afraid for he does not bear the sword in vain. He is God's diakonos. He is God's servant, God's deacon.

And he is administering vengeance and executing wrath on those who practice evil for the benefit of society. He's, you know, the government is the waitstaff ensuring that people who are not criminals have a safe, healthy, productive environment in which to live. It's a deacon function to eradicate crime and punish evil with the sword.

It's not somehow to rehabilitate the criminal or to, the focus is not on the criminal, the focus is on all the people that the criminal is harming. In Romans chapter 15, verse eight, Paul says, "I say, Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made to the fathers." The Lord Jesus, he's not a doulos to the Jews, the circumcision, to Judaism. He has become a waiter bringing something beneficial to the table.

It is a service function, but he is doing it for the service's sake. He's not beholden, but he is a deacon to the circumcision, to the Jews who are focused on the law for the truth of God. We've seen this.

He told Pilate, I am here, for this reason I was born, to bear witness to the truth, to confirm the promises made to the fathers. It's a deacon function. I commend to you in Romans 16, one, Phoebe, our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cancra.

She sees to their needs. She serves and makes an environment possible where people can hear the truth without distraction. We saw 1 Corinthians 3, 5, when we went through 1 Corinthians, and I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas, I am of Christ.

Paul says in 3, 5 of 1 Corinthians, who then is Paul? Who is Apollos? But deacons, ministers, through whom you believed as the Lord gave to each one. They brought you the truth. They ministered the truth.

They bring it to the table. What you do with it is on you, but they're not douloi to the churches. They're not douloi to unbelievers.

They're not slavishly bonded to them. They are deacons, and it's all about the service. Communicate the truth, bring the truth so that people can respond and develop their own relationship with God.

And in 2 Corinthians 3, 6, Paul has a little different take on it. God has also made us sufficient as diakonoi, as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit. The letter kills, the spirit gives life.

And we are ministers, we are deacons, we are servants bringing to you the new covenant. In chapter 6, verse 4 of 2 Corinthians, Paul says, in everything, we commend ourselves as deacons of God, as ministers of God, patience in distress and tribulations and needs and so on. Our fortitude, our willingness to undergo hardship is a testimony.

And this commends us as faithful ministers of God, those who bring you what you need.

2 Corinthians 11, 15, it is no great thing if Satan's ministers transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works. This is a powerful passage, by the way, for what is going on today.

Paul is talking and warning about false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness.

They put on this disguise and they are deacons for Satan. They're bringing Satan's ministrations, Satan's message, Satan's deceit, falsehoods, lies. And they present themselves, try to pass themselves off as ministers of righteousness, but their end will be according to their works.

And everybody who looks like a minister of righteousness isn't, and everyone who appears to be an apostle of Christ isn't. And this appearance is more than superficial. It's not that easy to spot.

There are those who seem like wonderful people, and you find their quotes on Facebook, and they say, you know, Jesus loved the poor and oppressed. And to be a Jesus follower, I can't think of any better way of doing it than to love and minister to the poor and oppressed. Think about that for a moment.

And the quote is, if you've done it to the least of these, you've done it to me. That's the scripture that goes with it. And this is from a fairly well-known individual.

He has since passed away, but his quotes, his writings are all over the place in modern, postmodern, progressive Christianity. And how can you argue with that? Jesus loved the poor and the oppressed. I can think of no better way to serve Jesus than to go out and love on the poor and the oppressed.

What's wrong with that? Is there anything intrinsically wrong with caring for the poor and the oppressed? No. What is the difficulty? Jumping straight to the action. Let's all close our Bibles.

Let's get up out of our chairs. Let's go right now to the streets of the city nearest us. Let's find some poor and oppressed people and let's help them.

That will be the most Christlike thing that we can do. Is that a correct premise, argument, and conclusion? Jesus loved the oppressed. The best way I can love and serve Jesus is to go love and serve the oppressed.

I did a little bit of statistical research, if you will, on the pastoral epistles. So in 1st and 2nd Timothy and Titus, what are the imperatives? These are the instructions to pastors who are exhorted to pass on and inculcate these truths to congregations and to find

faithful men who will take these same things in turn and pass them on to others. These are the priorities for the church.

What is it? Teaching and urging these things. Sound doctrine. In 1st Timothy 6.2, if anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching in 1st Timothy 6.3, guard what has been entrusted to your care in 1st Timothy 6.20. Hold the faith and a good conscience.

By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith in 1st Timothy 1.19. You must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine coming up in Titus 2.1. In 2nd Timothy, preach the word, be ready in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, and exhort with patience and teaching. 2nd Timothy 4.2. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you. Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

2nd Timothy 1.14. All scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, instructing in righteousness, 2nd Timothy 3.16. The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others, 2nd Timothy 2.2. In Titus, you must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine, Titus 2.1. Hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught so that others can be encouraged by sound doctrine and these to whom this mission is entrusted can refute those who oppose it, Titus 1.9. Avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, fables, arguments, quarrels about the law. They are unprofitable and useless. Don't get distracted by bad teaching, false priorities, Titus 3.9. Titus 2.7 and 8 in your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

In the past orals over and over and over again, there are at least 15 major passages in these three books that emphasize the importance of truth, sound teaching, sound doctrine, wholesome words, wholesome faith as we have seen repeatedly. Now I ask again, what about someone who says, well, to serve and follow Jesus, I'm going to find the poor and oppressed and I'm going to love and minister to them because this is the best way I can follow Christ. And my justification for this is Jesus saying, if you've done it to the least of these, you have done it to me.

So if I wanna love and serve Jesus, I'm gonna go find and minister to the poor and the oppressed. Again, what's the problem with that? What does it leave out? Everything we have just seen in 15 passages and more in the past orals, these good works, these concerns have to be built on a foundation of truth and faith. And you cannot leave out what Jesus says in that very context, if you have done it to the least of these, my brethren.

This is in the realm of one another. This is not a random oppressed person, a random poor person out on the economy. We have to have knowledge, insight, understanding.

We have to be as wise as serpents, even as we are as harmless as doves. And we practice love with wisdom and we are not going to be accessories after the fact to evil by randomly infusing the poor and the oppressed with resources. And you actually wind up sponsoring addiction, sponsoring evil by not knowing where of we speak and to whom and with whom we are ministering.

It has to be the fruit of truth and faith and love. With that at our core, with the word of God, ensuring that our motives and our perceptions are in line with God's plans and purposes, that the Holy Spirit is guiding and leading and enabling and empowering and leading us to plow and plant seed where there will be those conditions that will bear fruit. And we're not simply watering a field that is full of thorns.

So if you go to these same three books and look, how many times does Paul tell Timothy and Titus, ensure that the church and your deacons and your leadership and your elders are ministering to the poor. We know they're supposed to be apt to teach, that they should be on board with the truth and wholesome words and that which accords with sound doctrine and that they should be able both to teach what is positive and refute what is negative in terms of truth. What does it say in terms of the qualifications for elders and deacons and their wives and so on within the church? What does it say about caring for the poor and ministering to the oppressed in a random and indiscriminate fashion? When you ask people who have this idea, they'll say, well, you know, 1 Timothy 1.5, the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, good conscience and sincere faith.

So they should be loving, but that's talking about the ground and foundation of love, not the objects, because we are not to love everything. Love not the world or the things that are in the world. You should not have a love for money and a love for illicit gain.

And there's all kinds of prohibitions, things that we should not love. They say, well, recognize the widows who are really in need, 1 Timothy 5, as we saw, there's a whole extended section on widows in the church, but notice the standards and the restrictions on loving widows and caring for widows in the church. You need to encourage their families to do it first.

If they have no family, and if they're too old to get remarried and have a husband take care of their needs, then they can qualify for support from the church. If they are going to dedicate their efforts to the same family that is caring for them, they will care for the spiritual family, but it's limited and it's restricted. If these are the limitations and restrictions for widows in the church, what do you imagine are the limitations and restrictions on going out to random strangers on a street corner somewhere and trying to meet and minister to their needs? Are we going to be stringent inside the church, but we're going to be all beneficent on the outside? There are no commands.

There are zero commands in 1st and 2nd Timothy and Titus to random acts of kindness

to the poor and the oppressed on the outside. Remember 1st Timothy 5.16, if any woman who is faithful, who is a believer, it's translated in some cases, she's a woman of faith and she has widows in her care, she should continue to help them and not let the church be burdened with them so that the church can help widows who are really in need. What are the qualifications for the church to support those widows? It's a pretty tight set of standards.

And yet people are presenting themselves as ministers of light and angels of mercy and apostles of Christ in this age, telling the church to look outside itself. Don't worry about the truth. Don't worry about the foundation of faith.

Don't worry about wholesome words. Just get busy and help an oppressed person. That's how you love and serve Christ.

It is a lie. It is a deception. It is frosting on a Twinkie.

There is no substance. There is no truth. This is not what scripture teaches us to do.

But you twist and distort and decontextualize sayings and phrases in scripture and lead people into fruitless works that are pleasing to self and are not a part of God's plan and purpose because the Holy Spirit is not in it, because the Holy Spirit is not leading believers into truth. These are human beings leading fellow human beings into erroneous ways that seem right, but the ends thereof are death. And there are wonderful charitable services that we can render when we are enabled and empowered by God's truth and God's spirit.

This is not in vain against charity. This is talking about biblical charity that is God-glorifying because it is God-enabled, God-guided, God-empowered. It reflects God's glory because God is at work to will and to do His good purposes instead of people wanting to vindicate and justify themselves by saying, well, look, I fed some poor people and I gave a coat to a homeless guy.

That makes me a good person. Entirely avoiding the entire realm of truth, doctrine, wholesome words, accountability as a servant of God to our heavenly Father and our Lord and our Savior. There is all the difference in the world.

Well, this is what we are going to see coming up in Titus because leadership in the church has to focus on and communicate these truths. We are Diakonoi. We are Stephen and the other deacons meeting the needs of the widows, but we're doing it in the light of truth.

And the truth is first. Truth is the priority. You all can meet the needs of the widows because we need to dedicate ourselves to studying and teaching the word.

That's most important. And there is no service without the truth and the word. That's our

focus.

That's why we're a Bible church. That's why we are people who recognize the scriptures as inspired by God and profitable and furnishing us thoroughly for every good work. Scripture furnishes us for good work.

Good work doesn't make us good servants. Recognizing the truth and going forth in its power and reflecting its light, that's what makes us good servants. Well, much more about this as we dive into the text of Titus next time, but we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you that our relationship to you isn't murky. It's not unclear. What you would have us be and do is not buried in the mist or the fog.

Your word is so clear. Your scripture is so manifest as a light on our path with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit that we have only to respond in faith and in obedience to be those servants that are pleasing in your sight, accomplishing your purpose, a blessing to one another and to the world. We pray that as we reflect on these portions of your word, that God the Holy Spirit will illuminate our individual circumstance, our opportunities, our challenges in a way that enables us to live a life that is pleasing in your sight and glorifying to the Lord Jesus.

We ask it in his name, amen.