

Titus 24-07-28a

Good morning. It's the 28th of July, 2024. We are here at Grace and Truth Bible Church prosecuting our study in the book of Titus.

We have finished chapter one. We are entering into chapter two and these characteristics that are given, the descriptions that are given by the apostle Paul to Titus match many of those that we found in Timothy. And there are some key characteristics that we will look at this morning as we move forward into the theological groundwork.

Paul always does this sooner or later to talk not only about the practicalities but about the theology and the doctrines, the truths that give us the power to conform ourselves to these characterizations and descriptions. And of course, that's what we're after. We are practical people.

We need to know how to do a thing, not just that it needs to be done. And so this is a wonderful opportunity to have our minds, hearts, and souls equipped for becoming these kinds of people and entering into God's plans and purposes in a very fruitful way. So it doesn't get much better than this.

We're going to pick up here in a moment, but let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study. Father, as always, we count it a wonderful privilege and blessing to spend this time together, to be encouraged and built up not only by the teaching of your word but by the gifts that you have given and distributed to each one of us in a way that provides blessings both seen and unseen. We're grateful for our group and each individual in it.

We thank you for the faithfulness and perseverance of those who love the Lord Jesus, value His word, and are thankful for your grace in saving us, relating us to yourself as your children, and making it possible for us to serve and to come to an understanding of what you are accomplishing both in human history and in the larger sphere of the heavens and the earth. It is such a privilege, such a wonderful opportunity, and we're grateful for it. We ask that as we look at this portion of your word together this morning, that you will bless it to our hearts.

May your Holy Spirit find us ready and impressionable and that we can remember and think about and put into practice the principles, the promises, and the doctrines that we see this morning. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

So you will remember that Paul cuts right to the chase with Titus. Titus is in a very vexed civilization. The Cretans are pagans of the first water.

They are 24 karat gold non-Christians. Their culture reflects it, and it's encouraging in the sense that when we look at our culture, we say, well, this could be Crete in the first

century. We find in many cases that the culture is hostile.

And very different, has different priorities, different understandings, different values. In the past, when our society was conditioned by Judeo-Christian values, of course, as you well know, happiness and contentment was to be found in finding your role in the world and fulfilling it faithfully, obediently, as unto the Lord. And there is deep personal satisfaction, whatever that role may be, large or small, blue-collar, white-collar employment, to do what you do heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men, and to feel that God has guided you to a place of service and function that is providing the potential to reflect His glory, to learn and grow in grace and knowledge.

That was the hope. And this is why when you look at the second chapter of Titus, Paul tells Titus, as for you, in contrast to these whose mouths must be stopped back in verse 11, they're subverting households, teaching things which they ought not for the sake of dishonest gain, they need to be rebuked in verse 13 so that those who are endeavoring to grow and mature can be sound in the faith, not giving heed to fables, commandments of men who turn from the truth. And you know to watch for this kind of phrasing.

If someone turns from the truth, what does that mean? It means they were with the truth, in the truth, near the truth, hearing the truth, and they have turned away from it. It isn't that they never found it, that there was a lack and a dearth and a famine. It is that the truth was presented and it has been rejected or abandoned.

Turning from the truth. This is such a sadness. We are all acquainted with or know on even more familiar terms, those who have had the opportunity to be exposed to the truth, to benefit from it, to develop a relationship with God, the Father, through Jesus Christ, who is the truth.

And although they may be loved ones, they may be dear friends, they have turned from the truth to a narrative, to a story, to a philosophy, an idea that there is happiness and fulfillment to be found somewhere else. We are creations of God and we are only in our proper place. We are only fulfilled.

We are only productive when we are related to God fully and in a way that allows him to bless us with fruit. The substitute for that is fiction, fables. And when people turn from the truth, inevitably the substitute is going to sound good, but it is the sort of twinkie of life philosophy.

It tastes good initially, but it has no substance, no nutrition. It doesn't sustain strength or productivity. So in verse 15, to the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure.

This is a truth that has to be thought of carefully. We can tell ourselves, well, I'm pure, therefore whatever I do is okay. Well, you've automatically demonstrated that you're not

pure by the very impurity of that thought.

If we are sober minded, if we are humble, if we recognize that we only become what God wants us to be by his grace and through his strength, if we are purified in the Psalm 51 and 1 John 1, 9 fashion, then we are going to choose what is pure and all of those things will be pure. By our nature, we will not make impure choices to the extent that we are impure. We're going to accept, follow, practice, impure things.

This is a distillation and a summary of the importance of becoming in the modern day, as in the ancient day, going all the way back to Israel, we easily fool ourselves. One of those Jewish fables that has come down as an American fable is that what we do defines us. And if we can produce behavior that gains approval, that makes us pure.

I did a pure thing, therefore I am pure. And it's completely backward. We have to become people of purity so that our actions reflect what we have become in Christ.

It's such a simple thing. It's almost a truism or a tautology to say that we have to first be pure before we can act in a righteous manner. But look around, listen to what is being said and taught and practiced in mainstream Christianity today.

Everyone skips the personal becoming, the humility of finding and acknowledging sin, claiming God's cleansing grace and moving forward on the solid ground of the fruit of the spirit in advance of doing anything that gets skipped. Become a social justice warrior. Go out and help a poor person advocate for the oppressed.

Put a sign in your yard and a banner and an emoji in your social media that says, I support this oppressed group or this attacked group or these people on foreign soil somewhere. I'm a fan of this side or that side in the Israel-Gaza war. I'm a fan of this side or that side, mostly the Ukraine side of the Ukraine-Russia war.

Hard to find very many fans of Russia, but it is interesting to listen to their side of that conflict. People find it convenient to picture Mr. Putin and the Russian government and the Russians in general as incredibly evil ogres who want to do nothing but expand. He's a latter day Hitler or Alexander the Great or Caesar.

He just wants to go conquer for the sake of conquering. There actually are reasons, objectives and causes for that attack and the mindless bubblegum for the brain people never stop to consider that if you're actually going to pursue peace, you need to understand why someone has chosen to attack, to invade, and there are reasons that in their mind are completely practical, just, proper, necessary, patriotic, and there are Russian Christians who support the war against Ukraine. Why is that? Can you name three reasons why Vladimir Putin chose to invade Ukraine that don't just impute evil to him? If you can't, then it would be wise to investigate both sides before opining and blindly supporting something that we don't fully understand.

I say that to say this, we need to become people of truth, to pursue truth, to have it be the pillar and ground of our fellowship, our church should be a pillar and ground of truth, primarily spiritual truth, but pursuing spiritual truth means endeavoring to be objective, to overcome bias, prejudice, group think, and so on, not giving heed to fictions, to fables, to convenient superficial explanations and commandments of men who turn from the truth. And if the prevailing opinion prevails among people who have nothing to do with God or the truth, that opinion needs to be examined before it is shared and adopted, right? If you find yourself in harmony with the world and the world rejects God, Christ, scripture, and Judeo-Christian ethics, how is it that we can be in harmony with them? We need to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith and we need to be people of objectivity, of truth. We become before we practice, before we do.

You become a lawyer before you practice law, you become a soldier or a Marine or a sailor before you go out and engage in those activities, training, experience, adaptation to structure and authority. All of these things are spiritual truths and the training, the experience, the grounding in knowledge, epinosis has been so largely forgotten in mainstream Christianity that if we can remember, if we can be examples, if we can rise above average Christianity, which is sorrowfully inept and inadequate, if we can be genuine believers, this will shine the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ for the world. And those who are looking for genuine hope, genuine faith and genuine love will be drawn to it through us.

It's the best thing we can do for the world. Anybody can slap a Ukrainian flag on their social media to be a person that reflects faith and hope and love and offer genuine, eternal salvation that rises above world circumstances and self-congratulatory actions. I'm righteous because I support this.

I'm righteous because I advocate for that. What we do doesn't make us righteous. Righteous people do righteous things.

It's so largely forgotten, but that is the emphasis in this book. Don't give heed to fictions. Don't be talked into a point of view that doesn't reflect God's truth.

To the pure, all things are pure. Notice, become pure and your life, your conversations, your relationships, your actions, your priorities will be pure because you have become pure. Pure people know what purity is and they practice it.

It becomes a reflex. It becomes an instinct. It becomes a characteristic because we have become pure.

Can't emphasize enough this verse 15. To the pure, all things are pure. Why? In the same way that to an experienced mechanic, the repairs you do are good, solid repairs.

You don't read a book and decide, well, here's a good repair that somebody did. I'm

going to do that, but you don't know that that's going to fix the problem. Well, I'll just replace the carburetor and charge the client \$1,500 when all it needs is an idle screw adjustment.

I don't use carburetors anymore, but I like that illustration because I've got stuff that still has carburetors. Knowledge and experience first. Then what you do is going to be knowledgeable and reflect experience.

To the pure, all things are pure. To those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure. Even if you do something that you think reflects purity or you think other people are going to view as righteousness, it isn't.

Why? Because a bitter spring does not produce fresh water. You can ape, you can mimic, you can imitate good behavior. You can do superficial actions.

You can say superficial things. You can support what you believe to be good causes, and it may actually be a good cause, but your support for it, our support for it, winds up being sinful because it does not originate in purity. The origin defiles it before it ever leaves.

And you say, but it's good to resist those who want to abort. It's good to resist those who are practicing genocide. It's good to talk against those who are rascals in politics.

Anything I say against that person, that's just automatically good because he's evil or she is evil. Not if it comes from an impure source. To the impure, nothing is pure.

And that means acts of righteousness, perceived to be righteousness, are impure if we are impure. It seems pretty clear, doesn't it, that this verse emphasizes that we have to become pure before we can perform righteousness. Even their mind and conscience are defiled.

What do we know about the conscience? We've done extensive studies on the conscience. This is your correctness and truth detector. If it's broken, this is like having a broken GPS or a broken compass.

How can you possibly arrive at your destination? If you only know how to get to a place by Google Maps and your Google app is broken or your phone is broken or you fail to charge it and it runs out of gas and goes dark, then you're off in the wilds. Don't ask me how I know this, but if you're off in the rural wilds of Northeast Oklahoma and your phone dies and you're on back roads and you couldn't pin yourself on a map within 10 miles, how do you know where to go? If your conscience is defiled, you can't possibly know what is right, what is proper, what is good, noble, pure, lovely, of good report. You can't possibly know because your conscience is broken.

Conscience is defiled. They profess to know God. That's what we do, isn't it? Would you

say that compared to the average believer, you know God and you know about God? Look at all the hours of Bible study I've engaged in.

Look at all of my notes. Look at all of the writing in the margins of my Bible. I know God.

I know a lot more than the average believer knows. They profess to know God. That could be us.

I don't want to be a professor. In any sense, but I don't want to be professing to know something and think that I'm qualified to be that, and I'm not, and I don't. They profess to know God, but in works, they deny him being what? Abominable.

What is the, that's an adjective. What is the noun associated with abominable? It is abomination. What is the penalty for abominations in the old Testament? It is death.

It's a death penalty offense to be abominable, to commit abominations. The pagan, godless, child-sacrificing, Molech-worshipping, Ashtart-loving, perverted religions of Canaan were an abomination in the sight of the Lord. Do you really want to fall under that same descriptive umbrella? And this ought to sober us.

It ought to scare us a little bit. People who profess to know God, claim to know God, say they know God, are in fact, abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work. Disqualified, why? Broken conscience, impure.

We have to first become pure. I don't know why. It doesn't seem like it's a very difficult concept.

I feel like I'm Captain Obvious here, but in Christianity today, look around, listen to what is being said, read what is being published, inflict upon yourself podcasts and video series and programs and trends and resources, and there is lip service. Well, of course you need to pray. Of course you need to read your Bible, but mainly you need to get out there and do this and do that and say this and cultivate that in your behavior instead of stop behaving and stop talking and become a person of godly character with good conscience, a pure heart and a sincere faith.

As we saw in Timothy chapter one, first Timothy, they profess to know God. This scares me. I profess to know God.

Do you profess to know God? Am I in fact without conscious awareness because I'm not really examining the dark corners of my life? Am I being abominable? Am I being disobedient? That's a large area. How many different commands are there about how to think and how to talk, how to relate to others, the one another commands, all of the love commands. If I am not loving in some area, if I'm not doing it properly, if I'm not doing it in the power of the spirit, if the love of God is not being fully shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit, how would you characterize that? Am I obedient or am I disobedient? And

if I am disobedient, I'm starting to fall under the edge of this umbrella and that scares me and it ought to scare all of us.

I do not want to be blithely and indifferently disobedient and ultimately abominable in God's sight, disqualified from every good work because I didn't care enough to examine myself and see if I'm in the faith. And when I find that perhaps I'm not in the faith to get down on my knees and pray and go through the truth of God's word, cultivate the presence and power of God in my life through the word and the spirit and fix it, get it fixed. We can have patterned sins that go on for weeks, months, years.

And we say, well, you know, I remember somebody saying the old sin nature has an area of strength and an area of weakness. That's just my area of weakness and I'll just have to wait for a glory, have to wait for the resurrection body. No, now is the appointed time.

Now is the day of deliverance. And if we don't avail ourselves of God's power and God's grace and become pure and become righteous, we are going to be in a diminished place and a limited capacity in the eternal future. Eternity is on the line, service and function in the future, in the kingdom that is not here.

It's all on the line. This is not the kingdom. The kingdom is coming.

Will we be in the kingdom? Will we be in the capital of the kingdom? Oh, that is a fate devoutly to be wished, isn't it? To be an actual citizen of the New Jerusalem, to be qualified, to have a pass at the gate, to be allowed in. My dwelling is inside the wall and not outside, nearer to the land, nearer to the father, nearer to the tree of life growing on each side of the river of life. I live there.

That's my home. There's people that are proud of being New Yorkers, there's people who are proud of being from San Francisco, people proud of being from Dallas. I would love to answer the question in the eternal future, where are you from? Well, Jerusalem.

My mailing address is Jerusalem. Even the edge, just inside the gate, it might be a very modest one room apartment. Hopefully, Patty will qualify.

We could go a little further into the city. But think about it. I inject a little humor there, but this is a very serious reality that if we do not become people qualified to live where righteousness dwells, we won't dwell there.

And it is on the line now. We're still here. We're breathing air.

We have the opportunity to redeem the time, to invest in eternity, to lay up treasure for ourselves in heaven. Jesus encouraged us to not worry about treasure on earth, but lay it up in heaven where it can never diminish. It can never be taken away.

It's permanent and eternal. In order to do that, it isn't what we practice and the activities

we engage in here, it is who we become. The activities don't go forward.

The soul with its qualities and characteristics is what goes into eternity. So we become and what we become is going to be reflected in what we do. Is it hypocritical? Is it shallow? Is it superficial? Giving money to the temple, almost anybody would say, well, that's a good thing.

Look at how much money this Pharisee is giving to the temple. He really loves God and he's wanting the temple to be decorated and be kept up and look beautiful and well-maintained. What a good work that is.

Jesus said it's evil because of the source. The supposedly good action of contributing to the temple was in fact an abomination in God's sight because it was wrongly motivated. Look at what happened to Balaam when he was going to go deliver a prophecy that God wanted him to give, but he did it for the wrong reasons.

That's why you have the donkey. That's why you have the angel with the sword. That's why you have the talking donkey to confront him that he was doing a right thing in a wrong way for wrong reasons.

So can't emphasize enough. The culmination of chapter one is we must become before we do. Don't want to be those who profess to know God, but in works deny him being abominable, disobedient and disqualified for every good work that brings us to chapter two.

As for you speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine, sound doctrine. We've seen this description of soundness over and over again. The word for sound, of course, is the word from which we get hygiene.

It's healthy. It contributes to goodness and to good things. It comes from *hygieno*, change the U to a Y, you get hygiene.

Sound doctrine. And the doctrine is *didaskalia*, *didasko*, *didaskalos*. It is that which is taught God's truth.

It's not an abstraction. It's not just a slogan. There's content.

It is taught. That's what we're doing this morning. We're looking at the truth together and endeavoring to be taught by God's Holy Spirit to learn something that will improve our faith and function.

So we know these things. We don't have to belabor them. Older men, sober, reverent, temperate.

This is self-control. Sound in faith. You have that same word again, *hygienontas*, from *hygieno*, sound, healthy faith.

Sound in faith, sound in love, sound in patience, hupomone, to remain under, to bear up under, all of us have burdens. Do you collapse under them? Do you get discouraged? Do you get depressed? Do you go into the woe is me? What's the use mode? Or do we hupomone? I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I don't have to bear this burden in my own strength.

God would not put it on me if he did not also with it provide the means of either escape or endurance. If we get too tired, it's usually because we are trying to use our own strength. God's strength is limitless.

God's power is endless. We can feel it. We know that there is a burden.

I feel the weight, but I am bent but not broken. I am able to move forward even with whatever load. Why? It's not my strength I'm depending on.

And if we get down, we've got to realize that it's probably because we're beginning to forget how to let God's power bear the burden. Patience, hupomone, older women. Similarly, when it says older women, likewise, you know what you have to do? Older women, you got to go back and read every one of those older man descriptions.

Older women, likewise, should be sober. Sobriety really means operating in wisdom. This is from Nephale, and it literally means holding no wine.

Isn't that something? You're not giddy. You're not unsteady. Self-control, steadiness, as opposed to being unsteady.

You don't slur your words. You don't stagger your tread. Older women should likewise be reverent.

This is Semnas, and it has the idea of loftiness. You rise above the fray. You don't get down in the mud.

You don't get up to look upward and not horizontally all the time. Temperate, of course. This is Sophron or Sophronas, and it is very much established in wisdom, doing what is wise, doing what is proper, doing what makes sense.

This is spiritual common sense, sophronize. And that of course is reflected in self-control. Older women are likewise to be sound in the faith, sound in love, sound in patience, reverent in behavior.

Notice this is going to be reflected in what you do. It isn't something you do just sitting still and being inscrutable, reverent in behavior, not slanderers. Such a tough thing in the conversational realm to avoid leaving a negative impression or spilling beans that diminish the reputation of someone else.

The word for slanderers here, you'll like this, it's devils. Diabolos, not diabolous, not

devil-like. Why is Satan called the devil? Because he's the accuser, he's the slanderer.

Think about your political situation on both sides and it's, you want to talk about something deplorable? I'll tell you what's deplorable is when people use ad hominem and personal diminishment, criticism, mocking, deriding, making fun, developing nicknames that are unkind and uncomplimentary on any side. And it is rife in this election year, that's devilish. It partakes of the devil's practice.

Did you ever notice that when Jesus accuses the Pharisees, he doesn't mock them, he describes them. He points out their hypocritical actions, the distance between what scripture calls for and what they personally practice. It is their actions, their policies, their behavior that is under scrutiny and is described in the woes to the Pharisees.

Jesus never mocked someone's appearance, never mocked their personal characteristics, but it is a commonplace and it is Diabolus. My suggestion is as people who are to be well-spoken of by anyone in society on the outside and to encourage purity on the inside and in our Christian fellowship, we should abandon any form of denigration of public figures. Treat them with respect.

If you disagree, disagree with their policy, with their practice, with what they advocate, point out that it is not biblical, it's not a proper value, it isn't ethical, it's not moral, but the politics of personal destruction should be outside the one another's, outside the neighbor sphere and outside the realm of anyone with whom we interact in the world. We should be notable for not saying superficial, sarcastic, nasty things about anyone, especially when it is a characteristic of the world. Not slanderers, not given too much wine.

Wine is like many other things in these descriptive passages, it is put for anything that tips us off balance. It doesn't say no wine, it says not much wine. What's the difference in a little wine and much wine? In another place, Paul doesn't say, be not a drinker of wine, he says, be not drunk with wine.

Wine is not the problem, lack of self-control, excess to the point of diminishing your capacity to think, your capacity to feel, your capacity to talk, your capacity to walk, your capacity to maintain your self-control. An excess of alcohol in any form diminishes inhibitions. People say, well, you need to loosen up, what does that do? Well, you lose your inhibitions.

We need our inhibitions. There are parts of our nature that need to be inhibited and if we lose inhibition from an excess of anything, that is something to cut out, right? So not given too much wine, we shouldn't be given to anything that diminishes our self-control or takes away our godly inhibitions to not say and do impure things. Instead, teachers of good things.

The verse break here really should have been after not given too much wine. Verse four ought to begin with, teachers of good things. People say, well, women shouldn't be teachers in the church.

This is a single word, kalo didaskalos. Kalo is good, kalos is the word for good and it's good teachers. Kalo didaskalos, admonishing the younger women to love their husbands, love their children, be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands.

Why? Because we are exemplars, we are representatives of the word of God. And if people say, well, those doctrinal types, those bibliolators, they spend all their time, they sit, soak and sour, look at them. They get together and bad mouth everybody else and look down their nose at other believers and criticize churches and mock the Pentecostals and they mock the Holy Rollers and they don't like the Calvinists.

They don't like this. All they do is criticize other people. They're just big finger pointers.

They don't know that there's three fingers. We should never be accused of slandering others, looking down our nose at others, being holier than thou. We should be those who draw people to the benefits and to the good qualities that come from a concentration on the word of God.

Our life should be of a quality that the word of God is not blasphemed. Well, whatever you do, you don't wanna be one of those doctrinal types. You don't wanna be a Bible church person.

Look at them, they're just, they don't think anybody's good enough for their little group. That should never happen. It is possible.

Remember that there are things that are lawless and then there are things that are lawful. Love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. How does that end? What's the rest of it? Against such, there is no law.

Nobody argues with those qualities. Everyone admires those qualities, inside and outside the realm of belief. If you have the fruit of the spirit, people can't find anything to criticize about you.

Once in a while, if you have to adopt a policy of exclusion or separation, people will not understand and they may try to criticize, but they will eventually respect that you hold to your beliefs and you do so gently and lovingly, but firmly. You can sorrow even as you separate, but you still separate because you have integrity. You don't compromise, but you also don't slander, belittle, bad mouth, or otherwise violate the fruit of the spirit in following God's commands.

The word of God should not be blasphemed by the way we live, talk, and act. Well, that

brings us to verse six, and that's where we'll pick up when we come back from the break.