

Pure Church

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[0 : 00] Page 1198. 1198, Titus chapter 1, starting at verse 1.

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.

A faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time. And at his appointed season, he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour.

To Titus, my true son, in our common faith. Grace and peace from God the Father in Christ Jesus, our Saviour. Well, let's pray.

A tiny little book, but it's got a great punch. Titus has been given the responsibility for a group of small house churches on the island of Crete.

[1 : 34] So look at chapter 1, verse 5. Paul writes to Titus and he says, The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

So as the gospel, as the good news about Jesus spread from place to place, so people became followers of Jesus. They started little churches and they joined churches.

However, instead of growing as a pure church, it seems that these churches on the island of Crete have become impure.

As verse 5 said, things need to be straightened out. And there were two main connecting issues.

First, there was impure teaching.

Chapter 1, verse 11. He writes to Titus and says, These teachers, well, they must be silenced because they are ruining whole households.

[2 : 45] Those households there are these small churches. They are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach. And that for the sake of dishonest gain.

And this impure teaching has led, as it always does, to secondly impure living. Chapter 1, verse 16. They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for doing anything good.

The impure teaching has led to impure living. And this is so far from what the church is called to be. Look at chapter 2, verse 14. It reminds us there that Jesus Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

[4 : 09] God has called his church. He has rescued his people. Called a people to belong to himself. That the church might be pure. That they might be purified.

So as Paul writes this little letter to Titus, he is, if you like, handing responsibility over to him to encourage all these little churches dotted around the island to help them on the road towards purity.

So what are you saying, Johnny? Hmm? Is our church impure?

Is there something about this church that you haven't told us? Is your teaching impure? All the stuff we've been doing in Deuteronomy of late.

Was that all lies? Or are we all living impure lives? Is there something behind closed doors that we don't know about?

[5 : 15] Well, what I want us to do is to picture a very large washing machine.

Men, I know that's going to be difficult, but it's that white oblong shape in the house. It's got a door on. I want us to picture a very large washing machine.

Big enough to fit the whole church family. And we're all to climb in to this washing machine. Young people, older people, men, women, children.

Don't worry about staying outside to close the door. We'll get the caretaker to do that. And he'll flick the switch. Because what we want us to do is to let God's word, this short letter of Titus that we're looking at together, to wash us and to clean us and to remove any impurities that need to be removed.

Our desire, as I think the big themes of this letter suggest, is that we would have pure leaders who will teach pure doctrine, which leads to pure relationships, and is worked out in pure living and service, so that we might reflect the purity and the beauty of Christ to a world.

[7 : 04] And for the reason that Christ has come, look at chapter 3, verse 5. The middle of verse 5. Chapter 3, middle of verse 5.

He has saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. That's a big idea. This is what we're going to be about each week. Every time we meet together, we're going to be climbing into this washing machine, as it were. We're going to let God's word, this letter, wash us and clean us and remove any impurities that need to be removed.

Because our desire for this church is that we would have pure leaders who teach pure doctrine, which leads to pure relationships amongst one another.

And is worked out in pure living wherever we are during the week, whether that's at college or at home with the children or at work. And it leads to pure service as we serve one another, so that together we might reflect the purity and the beauty of Christ to the world.

[8 : 26] Because Christ has come to save us through the washing of rebirth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit.

So that's what we're about. Well, how is that going to happen? The path to purity.

In the introduction, Paul tells us what his ministry is, what he's about. And he tells this to Titus so that Titus might do the same things as he leads these churches towards purity.

And it's the same to us. This is what's going to help us towards the path of purity. First of all, faith. Trusting in Christ.

Look at verse 1. Paul, a servant of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of God's elect. Now it's simple.

[9 : 29] His ministry is to see people come to a clear faith in Jesus Christ. That's the first step. That's the primary thing. That's the big thing.

That people would have faith in Jesus Christ. Faith is primary. And it is always in Christ. What Christ has done for us, never in what we can do for him.

So look at chapter 3, verse 5. It tells us there, chapter 3, verse 5, that he saved us, not because of righteous things we have done, but because of his mercy.

So our faith is never in ourselves in the things that we can do, but it's always in God's Son, Jesus Christ, and what he has done for us. And that's the big idea behind this other little word, elect, in chapter 1, verse 1, for the faith of God's elect.

Now we usually get scared by words like that, don't we? Or the bigger word, it's cousin, predestination, run away from it. Don't understand it, so we ignore it.

[10 : 47] But you know what? They're good words. They're there deliberately because they help us to understand everything that God has done for us. So let me just try and explain.

Keep your finger in Titus and jump back to that great book that we've just looked at, Deuteronomy chapter 7. Deuteronomy chapter 7.

It's all over the Bible, and I just want to pull out one illustration or example of this.

Deuteronomy chapter 7, starting at verse 6. It's talking about election or choosing. So, Deuteronomy 7, verse 6.

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

[11 : 57] Well, why did he choose them? Were they because they were better or greater or more pure than everybody else? Well, look at verse 7. The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples.

In other words, because you were better or greater or more superior than everybody else. For you were the fewest of all peoples. There was nothing that made you better or greater. Verse 8.

But it was because the Lord loved you. So, back to Titus. Who chose who?

Well, it's clear that God chose his people. The people did not choose God. And it's exactly the same for us.

That God elects us. He chooses us to belong to him. It's his work within our lives. Not because we are better or greater or because we look lovely or because we're somehow more pure than other people.

[13:08] No, it's because he loved us. Because of his grace and his mercy. And what is our response to that loving choice?

Well, as it says in chapter 1, verse 1, it is always faith. Trusting in all that God has done for us in Christ.

His initiative, his intervention, his work in our lives. Trusting that it's all what Christ has done for us. So a pure church will never be one that's acting out of superiority and saying, you know what? I'm a Christian because of what I have done. Or, I'm better than everybody else because of who I am. No, a pure church are people who humbly trust in Christ.

It's by faith. So that's our first step. Second is knowledge. Our growing in Christ.

[14:19] Let's read verse 1 again. Paul, a servant of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth.

That's why Paul existed. That was what his whole work was about, was to bring people to faith and to see them grow in their knowledge of the truth.

In other words, we are to be people who grow up in Christ, which is the second step. We've got to move on from the initial step of faith to be people who mature and develop.

The beginning is great. It's wonderful. It's like that tiny little seed that cracks open and the first shoot appears. But that seed needs to be watered and fertilised.

It needs attention. Otherwise, that seed will become stunted and there will be no growth. Likewise, as believers, we need to grow in our knowledge of the truth.

[15:28] And that doesn't mean that we just have to have all the answers intellectually, that if we enter a quiz, we'll get a hundred out and know all the answers of the Bible and know where this verse is and that verse.

No, it's a knowledge of the truth that informs us and shapes our lives and shapes our hearts. So, look at chapter 1, verse 13.

We'll pick it up just in the middle of verse 13. He says, therefore, he says to Titus, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths, that's empty religious tradition, or to the commands of those who reject the truth.

So, we need to be people who are growing in the truth. And we need to be careful because so much of what is presented at times as the truth is not really the truth at all.

It's a lie. For example, there's a common lie that's being taught, that if we are a Christian, we are to live a suffering-free, comfortable life, that the Christian life has been designed and set up to bring as much comfort to you as possible and as little disruption to you as possible.

[16:56] Well, that is so opposite to the truth of the gospel. The truth says we are to live lives of service and sacrifice. It's about commitment and cost.

It's about walking the way of the cross. A life of submission and surrender following the Lord Jesus. Godliness. So a pure church is always going to be a church that is growing in their knowledge of the truth, not just with the head, but that truth in forming and shaping their lives and their families so that we will begin to live the kind of lives he calls us to.

Godliness. Well, third is godliness or becoming like Christ.

Again, let's read verse 1. Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect, the knowledge of the truth, that leads to godliness.

You see, these first steps of faith and the next step of learning the knowledge of the truth, all of that leads to godliness or Christ-likeness.

[18:24] Our faith in Christ, our growing in Christ, means we are being transformed to be like Christ. Of course, because of our faith, we are treated like Christ, as he looks down on us, we are treated like Christ.

Jesus was treated as we deserve to be treated on the cross, so that we might be treated as he deserves to be treated. However, we all know that we're not yet like Christ.

We're treated like him, but we're not like him. We're in this process of becoming like Christ. So as we exercise our faith in him, as we grow in our knowledge of the truth, so our lives begin to change. Look at chapter 2, verse 11. For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all people.

And what does this work do in our lives? Well, look at verse 12. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age.

[19 : 50] These are changes that should be evident to ourselves and to other people who look in on us. when we were younger, as a family, we'd often go to visit our grandparents in England.

And because it was a distance, and we usually went by boat, and, well, we wouldn't often see them for a couple of years. And after we'd arrive, and them not having seen us for such a long time, for the first day, all our grandparents would say to us as grandkids was, my, haven't you grown?

Look how tall you are. Joe, look at them. I'd hardly recognize them. Well, what else do you expect people to do?

We grow up, don't we? Well, as we get older, in our lives spiritually, and as Christians, as we begin to mature, is there that same character change?

As people look in at us, is it so obvious to look at one another and go, you have changed. You're not like what you used to be.

[21 : 11] Are people seeing a life that is saying no to ungodliness and saying yes to a godly life? A life that reflects the beauty and the purity of Christ?

You see, a pure church will always be changing and transforming and moving towards a Christ-like character, bit by bit, slowly but surely, and it will become evidence to all around us.

hope. Fourth, hope, forever with Christ. Look at verse 2.

He's talking about this faith, this knowledge, this godliness. Verse 2, a faith and knowledge resting or similarly leading to the hope of eternal life.

Life with Christ forever. That's the fourth step. And we know from our own experience that this earth, this world that we live in involves all kind of pain and suffering.

[22 : 33] We experience death, we experience disorder, the world is breaking, as we watch the news, we see all the different events going on, but for those who have the hope of the gospel, there is eternal life to come.

The new heaven, the new creation, the absence of all suffering and evil. And this eternal life, this hope is guaranteed. Look at the rest of verse 2, a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.

Now that's wonderful for us to know that that's what we've got to look forward to. But as wonderful as our future hope is, let's remember that future hope has to begin to shape how we live today.

So look at chapter 3, verse 7. Chapter 3, verse 7, having been justified by his grace, having been put right with God by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life, that same phrase.

This is what we're looking forward to, this is what is ours. Now what difference does it make that we have the hope of eternal life? Well look at verse 8, this is a trustworthy saying and I want you to stress these things so that those who have trusted in God and who have this hope may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.

[24 : 20] we are to devote ourselves to doing good today because we have become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

We're looking forward to the new creation and because we are going to inherit all this that means we can give ourselves over to serving others no matter the cost or the sacrifice.

what does it matter if we lose our life on this earth? What does it matter if my schedule is disrupted? If we have heaven to gain what does it matter?

A pure church lives with the reality of an eternal hope to come which changes our lives today to one of sacrifice and service.

So this is the path to purity. This was the ministry of Paul as he went about the different churches.

This is the ministry he now passes on to Titus and he says you are to teach these same things to see people come to faith in Christ to see people growing up in Christ to see people becoming more like Christ and to see people change with the hope of being with Christ forever.

[25 : 50] This is the path this is the direction that we need to go on. But how do we get this purity?

How do we kind of internalise it? How is it going to shape us? How is it going to change us? How is it going to permeate the family of this church?

Well he tells us how. it happens through the teaching of God's word or as we've called it here preaching towards purity.

Look at verse 3. All of this happened at his appointed season he bought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our saviour.

You see as Paul began to preach as Christ commanded him as he began to teach God's word it led to people trusting in Christ. As he began to preach and teach God's word it led to people growing in Christ.

[27 : 03] As he preached it led people to becoming like Christ. As he preached it led people being forever shaped by the hope of Christ.

You see as he taught God's word sometimes publicly sometimes one to one as he explained God's word so the Holy Spirit took that word and it began to change and transform people and began to lead them towards purity.

That's why he says to Titus in chapter 2 verse 1 you must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. Or chapter 2 verse 15 these then are the things that you should teach because it's only as God's word is taught it's only as the Holy Spirit takes that word and teaches us in our hearts that he can take what is impure and remove the impurities and make it pure.

And that's why we're here. That's one of the primary reasons why we gather together on a Sunday like this. That's why we're listening to God's word being taught.

That's why we've opened up the Bible to this little letter of Titus because it's God's word being taught into our lives. Which brings us back to our big summary.

[28 : 48] So let me remind us all about what we're doing here. We've climbed into the washing machine and we're letting God's word, this short letter, wash us and clean us to remove any impurities that need to be removed because our desire for this church and for one another is that our leaders would be pure, that I would be pure, that Ralph would be pure, that any leaders to come would be pure and that we would teach pure doctrine truth about Jesus Christ that leads to pure relationships within the family of the church and all of that being worked out in pure living wherever we are in the coming week that people see a Christ likeness and a pure service as we sacrificially give and all of this so that we might reflect the purity and the beauty of

Christ to a world because Christ has come look at chapter three the end of verse five remember why Christ has come to save us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit we need to bring the purity and the beauty of Christ to a world who not only washes and cleans us but can wash and clean others and one who will not only just renew us by his Holy Spirit but will renew our community renew our families and renew the world let's pray and ask God to do his purifying work amongst us

God