AM Titus 1:1-4 & 2:1-15 Five Fundamental Truths

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[0:00] Please turn with me in your Bibles to Paul's letter to Titus, the letter of Paul to Titus.

Titus chapter 1. Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began, and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted, by the command of God our Saviour.
To Titus, my true child in a common faith, grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.
We move on to chapter 2. But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love and in steadfastness.
Older women likewise are to be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. There to teach what is good. And so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.
[1:50] Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works. And in your teaching, show integrity, dignity and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

Slaves are to be submissive to their own masters in everything. They are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.
For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Who gave himself for us, to redeem us from all lawlessness, and to purify for himself a people for his own possession, who are zealous for good works.
Declare these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you. Amen. And may God bless to us that reading from his word, and to his name be the praise.
[3:32] Shall we turn back with me to the letter of Paul to Titus? We shall be looking this morning at verses 11 to 14 of chapter 2.

Titus chapter 2 verses 11 to 14, under the title, Five Fundamental Truths. Five Fundamental Truths. Titus, the recipient of this short letter, had a tough assignment.
He was a co-worker of the Apostle Paul. Shortly before he wrote this letter, Paul had spent time on the island of Crete, probably after being released from his first period of imprisonment in Rome. Under Paul's ministry, people had been converted, and churches had been set up. But these churches needed to be properly organised.
[4:40] In particular, in particular, they needed to have elders set over them, who would care for the young believers. To see to this, Paul had left Titus on the island.

But Crete presented some real challenges. In chapter 1, Paul quotes approvingly the words of a Cretan poet about his own people.
Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. Moral standards in Crete were clearly not high. More than that, there were false teachers hovering in and around the fledgling churches. We're not told exactly what they were teaching.
There seems to have been a Jewish element to it all. Paul refers to those of the circumcision party and to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.

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[5:52] It wasn't just what those men taught. How they lived also gave cause for concern. Paul says of them, they profess to know God, but they deny Him by their works.

They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. Paul wanted Titus to ensure that the churches were committed to sound teaching and right living.
In fact, that's a prominent theme of the letter. Truth and godliness go together. Belief and behavior should be all of a piece.
It's interesting how Paul introduces himself at the start of the letter. He describes himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness.
The faith of God's people matters to Paul. He wants them to know the truth and to live it out in godly living.
[7:11] Here in chapter 2, Paul outlines the sort of godly behavior he wants the Cretan believers to reflect. It's behavior which, in the words of verse 10, adorns the doctrine of God our Savior.

And in verses 11 to 14, Paul gives a brief summary of the doctrine he has in mind. I'd like to look with you this morning at these four verses which set out five fundamental truths relating to the gospel.
These truths are just as relevant for us today as they were for the Cretans in the first century AD.
The first truth I'd like to highlight is this.
Salvation is rooted in God's grace. Salvation is rooted in God's grace. Paul writes in verse 11, The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people.
The grace of God has appeared the message of salvation is all about what God has done in his grace and kindness.
[8:40] God's grace is his unmerited favor powerfully demonstrated to sinful men and women. It has appeared, it has been revealed, it has been shown in the giving of his Son who has done for us what we could never do for ourselves.

Paul makes that clear in verse 4 of chapter 3 where he writes, When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us. Not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.
Salvation cannot be earned. We cannot do anything to earn God's favor. All we deserve is God's judgment. if we are to be saved it can only be by God's grace.
Only through Jesus can we be made right with God. He lived the life we should have lived and died the death we deserve to die.
He bore our sins in his own body on the cross. In the words of Augustus Toplady, nothing in my hands I bring simply to thy cross I cling.
[10:31] Salvation is rooted in God's grace. It's a basic point but we mustn't lose sight of it. It means none of us has any grounds for boasting before God.

but it also means that no one is too sinful or too depraved to be saved. We stand on level ground at the cross.
Salvation is rooted in God's grace. The second truth is that the offer of salvation is extended to all.
The offer of salvation is extended to all. Paul writes the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people.
Paul doesn't mean by this that all people will be saved. That would contradict what he says elsewhere and the teaching we find in the rest of the Bible.
[11:36] God's judgment is a solemn reality. There is a hell to be shunned. No, the point Paul is making is that the gospel invitation isn't restricted in its scope.

It isn't limited to any particular ethnic group. It's for everyone. Even for Cretans. Whatever our background, whatever our circumstances, everyone is invited to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.
The gospel invitation is genuinely inclusive. It wasn't always so clear that salvation was offered to all.
For centuries, the people of God were largely identified with the people of Israel. And even they had a somewhat limited appreciation of the way of salvation since they approached God through priestly intermediaries and on the basis of sacrifice.

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But with Christ's life, death, and resurrection, clarity has come. And his disciples are instructed to go out into all the world and to preach the gospel to every creature.
[12:57] The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people. The gospel was relevant to Cretans, however unpromising they might appear, as well as to every other people group.

Titus could have confidence in such a message, and so can we. The offer of salvation is genuinely inclusive.
The call to repent and believe is for everyone. There's a story told about a black lift attendant in a New York store.
He was a Christian, and when people came into his lift and asked for the fourth or the fourteenth floor, he would say, yes, I can take you to the fourth or the fourteenth floor, but I can't take you to heaven.
And he was challenged as to about why he adopted such a corny approach to evangelism, and his reply was this, I'm just a nobody who wants to tell everybody that there is somebody who can save anybody.
[14:24] I'm just a nobody who likes to tell everybody that there is somebody who can save anybody. The gospel invitation is for everyone.

Salvation is rooted in God's grace. The offer of salvation is extended to all. The third truth I'd like to highlight from these verses is that God is our saviour.
God is our saviour. Paul speaks in verse 13 of the glorious appearing of our great God and saviour Jesus Christ.
We've already seen how in verse 10 he refers to the doctrine of God our saviour. And before that in chapter 1 verse 3 he is said that he was entrusted with the preaching of the gospel by the command of God our saviour.
God our saviour. That's worth thinking about. Paul clearly wants to make a point. Here in verse 13 of chapter 2 where Paul speaks of our great God and saviour Jesus Christ it's not immediately clear whether he's describing Jesus as God and saviour our God and saviour Jesus Christ or is referring to both the father and the son our great God and our saviour Jesus Christ but there is general agreement among scholars that there are good grammatical reasons for concluding that Paul means that Jesus is our great God and saviour our saviour is divine you may say well we know that don't we after all orthodox
[16:31] Christians have believed that from the earliest days of the church the Jesus who lived and died in Palestine 2000 years ago was none other than God the son God in human form God come on a rescue mission but I want to ask you do we really take on board what that means if our saviour is none other than God that surely has massive implications let me suggest just two number one down play sin we treat it as if it were of little moment but that's not how it is every sin is an act of rebellion against the

God who created us and to whom we are accountable it's an affront to a holy God every sin merits his judgment on account of our sin we are enemies of God and God is angry with us what greater proof could there be of the need to treat sin seriously than that it required God to give himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness sin is serious the second implication of God being our saviour is this if the saviour from sin is none other than God himself how can we possibly spurn the offer of salvation low at midnight who is he prays in dark gethsemane who is he upon the tree dies in grief and agony it is the
Lord oh wondrous story tis the Lord the King of glory and we need to respond in the words of that hymn at his feet we humbly fall crown him crown him Lord of all in the words of the writer to the Hebrews how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation John Newton the converted slave trader who became an Anglican clergyman said at the age of 82 my memory is nearly gone but I remember two things that I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great savior Newton reckoned with the seriousness of sin but he also lived in the good of a great salvation do you do
I the fourth truth I'd like to highlight is this sanctification is integral to salvation justification justification is the theological word we use to describe how God puts us in the right with himself he does so as we have noted solely on the basis of what Jesus has done his atoning death is treated as ours and his obedience is put to our account that's why Horatius Bonner the hymn writer could say upon a life I did not live upon a death I did not die another's life another's death I stake my whole eternity Paul says in verse 14 that Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all

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lawlessness but
Paul doesn't stop there he goes on to say that Christ's purpose in dying was also to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works in other words Christ gave his life to win a holy people by his death he not only paid the penalty of sin he broke sin's power to be sure we shall never be free from sin for as long as we live but we should be zealous for good works we should be growing in holiness we should be becoming more like the Lord Jesus there should be a degree of transformation in our lives that's what sanctification is all about and that's something we can lose sight of we can even emphasize forgiving grace at the expense of discipleship you know salvation isn't like a life assurance policy when you take out a life policy there isn't much you can do with it other than put the paperwork away in a safe place and forget all about it you know a claim can be made against the policy if and when you die but the policy doesn't affect how you live in the meantime salvation isn't like that yes it secures your future it guarantees a share in the inheritance of the saints in light but it should also make a difference to how you live here and now saved people have work to do we are called to a life of discipleship as someone has said the [23:31] Christian life is one of daily detailed obedience as I was preparing this sermon I happened to come across in a book I was reading comments made by the Bible teacher John Sott at the Keswick convention of 1965 Stott gave a series of Bible readings on the epistle to the Romans and Stott in his characteristically clear way pointed out how in the epistle Paul unfolds the way of justification and then describes its fruits its results he goes on this is important because too many of us think and behave as if the gospel were only good news of justification and not good news also of holiness and of heaven as if having come to

God through Christ we had arrived as if we had come to a dead end and there were no further road to travel but this is not so if his comments were relevant in 1965 I suspect they're even more relevant in 2022 Paul makes that point here in verse 12 he says that the grace of God trains us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self controlled upright and godly lives in the present age in other words if God's grace is at work in our lives it trains us to say no to some things and yes to other things it teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions to desires and behavior that are incompatible with
God's standards and inappropriate for those who claim to be his people and at the same time God's grace tutors us in self control and right living and helps us to pursue godliness note that God's grace trains us we don't work at godliness in our own strength but we need to be open to being trained we need to be teachable and we need to put the lessons into practice we're not passive spectators we're called on by God's grace to resist temptation and strive to do what is right sanctification is not an optional extra it's not an add-on something only for super keen
Christians we don't earn our standing before God by means of our sanctification but the fact is that God sanctifies those he justifies in that sense sanctification is integral to salvation can I ask you as I ask myself are we submitting to the training Paul speaks about here if we're not we need to ask ourselves if we're Christians at all here's another quotation from John Newton I am not what I ought to be I am not what I want to be I am not what I hope to be in another world but still I am not what I once used to be and by God's grace I am what
I am salvation is rooted in God's grace the offer of salvation is extended to all God is our savior sanctification is integral to salvation the fifth and final truth I would like to bring to your attention is that saved people have a future focus saved people have a future focus Paul speaks in verse 13 of our waiting for our blessed hope the appearing of the glory of our great God and savior Jesus Christ we've seen how Christians have worked to do for as long as we live in this present world but we look forward to a better world when the
[28:46] Lord Jesus returns to wind up history and unveil his kingdom in all its fullness we wait expectantly for that hope to be fulfilled hope in the biblical sense is not wishful thinking I may hope it won't rain tomorrow it would be nice if tomorrow was dry but I can't be sure it will be and there's certainly nothing I can do about it it may be dry it may be wet that kind of wishful thinking is not the sort of hope of which the Bible speaks biblical hope is assured confidence we look forward to something that's guaranteed the funeral liturgy of the Anglican church picks up on this when it speaks of the sure and certain hope of the resurrection it's not suggesting the resurrection is in any doubt because it speaks of hope no it describes the hope of the resurrection as sure and certain because Jesus died and rose again those who have died in the faith of Jesus will also be raised to resurrection life and that's the kind of hope

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Christians have in relation to Jesus second coming remember how at the ascension angels assure the disciples as they stood gazing up into heaven this Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven the writer to the Hebrews assures his readers just as it is appointed for man to die once and after that comes judgment so Christ having been offered once to bear the sins of many will appear a second time not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him the kingdom of God has come with the coming of the king but that kingdom has yet to be consummated the gospel is relevant to life here and now but we don't yet enjoy all its blessings that's why we look forward in hope or at least we should we can so easily lose that future focus for one thing we are afraid that we will be accused of being so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly use but actually when we look at the broad sweep of church history it's usually those who were most heavenly minded who have been of most earthly use think of

Lord Shaftesbury he was a tireless social reformer in 19th century Britain he used his position as an MP and well connected aristocrat to improve working conditions in factories mills and mines he tackled child labour he championed educational opportunities for the poor better conditions for people committed to lunatic asylums and better housing for the poor and he did so as a committed Christian convinced of the Lord's imminent return I suspect the reason many of us lack a future focus is that we have become too comfortable with life as it is that is understandable up to a point advances in health care and increased affluence have made life easier for many than was the case in previous generations but ours is still a world under judgment our lives are still scarred by sin and its consequences we experience disappointment heartache suffering and sorrow recent events such as a worldwide pandemic economic turbulence and war in Europe have reminded us this world is not our home we are just a passing through so are we waiting for the blessed hope of which Paul speaks in the midst of the doom and gloom which surrounds us at present are we men and women of hope Christian hope is underwritten by the promises of God it's also productive the apostle John writes beloved we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared but we know that when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure Christian hope should spur us on to prepare for the future that is guaranteed five fundamental truths salvation is rooted in God's grace the offer of salvation is extended to all

God is our savior sanctification is integral to salvation saved people have a future focus are we clear on these truths and do we live in a way that reflects them and commends them to others as Paul reminded Titus doctrine and lifestyle go together may we in everything adorn the doctrine of God our savior shall we pray

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