

The Ministry Of The Word

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 March 2023

Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[0 : 0 0] The letters to 1st and 2nd Timothy and Titus, as you probably know, are popularly referred to as the pastoral epistles. But to be honest with you, that title can be a little bit misleading.

It's only been popularized probably in the last 150 years to even call it that. And if we're not careful, if that's how we're thinking about these books, we'll think that they're basically irrelevant to the everyday Christian, that the purpose of them is really just to inform pastors or church leaders or to give a polity for church structures that bore us to tears and all of those kinds of things. But really, that's not what these books are. That's not at least only what they are. They're relevant for the whole church. And though portions of these letters are indeed personal, they were never intended to be private. And if you think back all the way to when we introduced this book, we talked about this a little bit. This letter to Titus was never meant to be a private letter. Titus is inspired scripture. It is inspired by God for the purpose of instructing his church, of instructing his people. And once Titus received this letter, he wouldn't have kept it to himself. It was read publicly in the churches in Crete. To the congregations of the church, it was there. This message that's given to Titus was intended for them. They were held accountable to it in the same way that Titus was held accountable to it. And then beyond that, they meticulously copied it and then distributed those copies, which is exactly why you have a copy of it today in your hand. Because the early church understood that this letter was not just personal anecdotes written to Paul's colleague. It wasn't that somebody came across it at some point and just decided, hey, this is pretty cool. We should put this into the collection of things that Paul has written and somebody eventually decided, oh, well, let's just call it scripture. That's not what this was. The early church from the earliest days understood that this was inspired scripture. So they meticulously copied it. They distributed it, understanding that this was God's instruction for his people.

So its usefulness is not just limited to church leaders. That's the first thing I want you to understand before we even really dig in to this verse that is directed specifically to Titus. The title for pastoral epistles, it stems from this undercurrent of pastoral instruction that courses through all of the doctrinal and practical teaching of the letter. So in addition to Paul saying, this is the truth of the gospel, this is the truth of the gospel, and these are the behaviors that harmonize with it, Paul directed Titus and then by extension, the elders that Titus would appoint to the churches on how they could effectively shepherd the churches in their care. That's the intention of the pastoral instruction. It's not that Paul was saying, I'm just going to give this kind of a church manual to these guys that they'll follow. Now he's writing to the churches, but underneath this doctrine and these practical elements, he's telling these church leaders, this is how to incorporate these truths into the care of the church. And all of this pastoral instruction in Titus ultimately amounts to this.

It amounts to an exalted view of scripture that's expressed in word-based ministry. Okay, I'm going to say that again. It amounts to an exalted view of scripture that expresses itself in word-based ministry.

And verse 15 in chapter 2 makes that abundantly clear. It's a summary statement that stands on, it's on its own. That's why we're dealing with it on its own this morning. In fact, the translators of the Bible in your hand or the device in your hand, whatever it is you're using, probably even made this visibly distinct. My Bible at least, verse 15 stands on its own. It's its own paragraph.

[4 : 21] If your Bible is that way, the translators have done that intentionally so that you might understand that this verse stands on its own. It's not that it's irrelevant to the paragraph before it or the paragraph after it. It's actually incredibly relevant to those things. But the passage stands on its own, and that's how we're going to deal with it this morning. Last week, I told you that verses 11 through 14 serve as the theological foundation for everything that Paul wrote to Titus.

It is the clear gospel message that is the basis of everything Paul was concerned about here. Everything Paul was concerned about in all the other letters as well. It's the truth of the gospel.

Well, we might consider verse 15 and the instruction that it contains to be the practical outworking of that gospel message, not only in the ministry of a pastor to the church, but in the church to one another. In our efforts at discipling one another, in our efforts at evangelism, this verse encompasses in a summary form how we are to use the gospel in ministry. In other words, here's what Paul does in verses 11 through 14. He says, here is the gospel message. And in verse 15, he says, here is what you must do with it. Here's the gospel, Titus. Here's what you must do with it. And there's three very straightforward commands given in the verse. Two of them are positive. One is negative. Christians are to speak the word of God. They are to teach it with authority and they are to prevent contempt for the gospel in those who hear them. Okay. Those are the three things we're going to look at. Speak the word, teach it with authority and prevent contempt in the hearers. First, let's look at speaking the word. At the very beginning of the verse, the first phrase, Paul says, declare these things. The word for declare here, it is *laleo*, is not the typical word for preaching. That's what's interesting about it here. We often would think to the famous verse in 2 Timothy, when Paul finally gets to the end of it, and he just says, preach the word, Timothy. Well, this is not the same word that he uses to Timothy.

It just means to speak. Simply speak the word. Speak these things, Titus. But still, the context of the verse gives us this sense of asserting truth. Declare, proclaim, announce. And certainly, the primary task for church elders are prayer and the ministry of the word. But this ministry of the word is not limited to Sunday morning sermons. Paul's not just concerned that Titus would preach this message on the Lord's Day worship. He is intent that Titus would speak the truth of God, that he would speak these things, that he would declare them through the fullness of his ministry in Crete. So that everything pastors do, even in the administrative oversight of the church, is to have communicating the truth of God as its central focus. Just a couple of weeks ago, Shane and Andy and I sat down to work on the new budget for the budget year coming up that will begin in May. And the first thing that we did before we ever met is we rehearsed biblical principles for stewardship, biblical principles for what God expects of us. We watched a lecture about it. Why? Because everything we do, even in formatting a church budget and designating how we're going to steward the resources that God has given us, has the intention from church leadership for communicating the truth of God. It is setting a pattern of looking to God for our sole source of truth and behavior. This is the only way to really, truly shepherd God's people. That's why we say if, you know, at the end of our church covenant, we always say if at any point you move on from this place, you are covenanting that you will, as quickly as possible, join with another church who is faithful to the gospel and is faithful to the things that God says in his word. And part of that, as we're looking for a church, is finding a pastor who's consumed with the Bible, whose ministry is consumed with the word, not his own passions, not his own thoughts and opinions, but the word of God. And as a congregation, we need to make sure that we are encouraging our leaders to prioritize this word-based ministry. We want them to give the majority of their time to preaching, to counseling, to evangelizing, to discipling people in the truth.

That's what God has called them to do. We need to hold them to that. You need to hold me to that. Otherwise, I cannot truly shepherd you. But I want to suggest also this morning that this priority of word-based ministry does not only belong to the leaders of the church.

[9 : 57] It belongs to every Christian, every believer. Now, I'm not talking about giftedness here. I'm not talking about the things that we would say would be the ways that God, by his spirit, gifts us to serve the church. And by all means, many of those ways are not related to speaking gifts or teaching gifts. We're not talking about giftedness. We're talking about responsibility. Every believer, every Christian is responsible for speaking truth to others in obedience to what Christ has commanded us to do. So as Paul is writing this to Titus, he is intent that pastors faithfully speak God's truth, at least in part, because all believers are to do so. And pastors are to lead the way in this evangelism and discipling and counsel. So then my responsibility at Lakeside Bible Church, my teaching in our church is to both shepherd your soul and to train you on how to shepherd the souls of others. It's not just about enlightening your mind. It's about training you to do the work of ministry yourself. This belongs to each of us. And classically, we find this spelled out in Ephesians chapter four. Paul says, and God,

Christ gave shepherds and teachers, shepherd teachers, pastor teachers, to equip the saints for ministry. And what is that work of ministry? It's the building up of the body of Christ. And how does he intend for the building up of the body of the Christ to take place? By speaking truth in love, he says. We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head. And we talk about this verse all the time because it is so crucial to what we are to be as a church and how we are to behave as a church. We have a responsibility to one another. Consider Hebrews chapter three and verse 13. The writer says, exhort one another every day.

He's not writing to leaders here. He's writing to the church. He says, exhort one another every day, as long as it is called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Declare these things. Speak to one another these truths. We have a responsibility to it. But what exactly is it that we're commanded to declare? Paul says, declare these things. Well, that's not very helpful. What does he mean? What are these things? Well, fundamentally, it refers to the gospel message of verses 11 through 14 and the behaviors that accord with the gospel message in verses 1 through 10. Set your eyes on verse 1 again at the beginning of chapter 2.

But as for you, Titus, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Sound doctrine primarily being the gospel message. What accords with the gospel message is the behaviors that harmonize with it. In other words, we must be faithful and committed to declaring the doctrines and commandments of the word of God.

[13 : 28] You see, most of us, the struggle that we have is not speaking. It's not speaking to others. We all have a way. Even if you are the most introverted among us, you still have communication.

There are ways that you interact with other people. Even if it's just with the people in your home, you're interacting, you're communicating, you're speaking. Typically, that's not our problem. We're speaking. The problem often is what is the source of that speaking? What is it that we're actually communicating to people typically? When you go to coffee with your friend who's really just going through a particular struggle in their life, be it a struggle in their marriage or a struggle with their finances or a struggle with their health, or maybe they're just down and they need some encouragement, what is it that you give them for that encouragement and that comfort?

If it doesn't have anything to do with the word of God, you're not doing it right. That's the point. Declare these things. Let these things, let the word of God be on our lips and in our mouths.

So much of Christian discipling seems to be absent of the clear teaching of the Bible. We want to help others, but we're not always looking to the scriptures for the answers to life, for the things that actually bring comfort, for the things that actually do lift up our hearts.

Our counsel often can be saturated with emotionalism, maybe self-help ideas, but what we should continually be asking ourselves in these conversations is what does God tell us in the Bible? What does the gospel instruct us on in relation to this thing?

[15 : 17] Colossians chapter 3. I grew up, I don't know if any of you have ever even heard of this, but I grew up going to Patch the Pirate Club. Anybody go to Patch the Pirate Club? You went to Patch the Pirate Club. That's amazing. We sail with Patch the Pirate.

We should sing that on a Sunday. The club verse, I can remember my mom was the, for a few years, was the Patch the Pirate Club leader or captain, whatever it was called.

And every week we would stand up and she would say, all right, sailors, club verse. Colossians 3.16 was the verse. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, giving thanks in our hearts to the Lord.

That's a command to the church that Paul gives. And what is the command? Let the word of God dwell in you richly insofar as you can go to others and you can teach them and you can admonish them in wisdom, true wisdom that's founded on the word of God.

And what's one of the ways that we do that most often? In our Sunday worship. As we gather together and we sing Christ, the true and better Adam, son of God and son of man, who when tempted in the garden, never yielded, never sinned.

[16 : 37] We teach one another that. There is this, Keith Getty talks about this so often, there is this dynamic in our church worship services in just the way even that we set up our seating, where we work against this instruction.

I heard him talk about one time, we set up our services, and I've done it, but we set up our services where everything is focused on a platform. He said, but the sense of this verse is that maybe we set up our chairs in a circle so that as we're singing songs of the Lord, we're not singing them to a person that is leading us, we're singing them to one another.

We are teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs that inform our hearts and inform our minds. And then when we go to coffee after the service and we're sitting, we're talking with our friend who's going through a particular struggle or maybe has questions about the gospel, we can say, do you remember the song that we sang today?

This is what the Bible teaches about it. This is who Jesus is. This is what he has done for us. This is our responsibility, church. Declare these things. Speak these things.

We are to be filled with the word of God and routinely speak this gospel to others. Whether it's the pastor in the pulpit, whether it's a parent at the dinner table, whether it's a friend at the coffee shop, our words are to be filled with God's truth, declaring these things to others.

[18 : 01] So Paul says, declare these things. Speak the word of God. Number two, he says, teach it with authority. Teach it with authority. Look at verse 15 again.

Declare these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority. So the terms used in the very first phrase, declare these things, really relate to just speaking truth.

But the terms of the second phrase have the nuance of instruction, personal instruction. To exhort means to entreat.

It's to earnestly implore someone to do something. Julie, please let me get a milkshake today. It is to entreat.

It's to plead with. In this case, it means to plead with others, to believe and obey the gospel, to obey God, to care about the Sabbath, to care about the Lord's day.

[19 : 02] To rebuke is to admonish or to correct. It's just a different form of teaching. Here it refers to correcting errant teaching and sinful behavior.

Both of these actions are absolutely essential for a pastor to faithfully shepherd the church and for all Christians to evangelize and disciple one another.

There's no way around it. It's not enough to merely state what the Bible says. We must plead with people to believe and obey it.

Because I could come in on it one day and I could say, Jesus rose from the dead. That's important. It's true. But it's different from me coming in and saying, Jesus rose from the dead, therefore bow to him as Lord, receive him as Savior, trust in him.

Do you see? There is the speaking of the word, then there's the instructing of the word, the exhortation, the rebuke. Now the third term in this phrase is really what gets at the heart of the instruction.

[20 : 17] Paul said that Titus was to plead and correct with all authority, he says. And this is where things get a little tricky for us, isn't it?

Because none of us want to assume authority over other people. That is without a doubt frowned upon in our modern culture. No one likes to be told what to do. Few people like to be the ones actually telling others what to do.

There are some nut jobs out there, but there's few people that actually really enjoy doing that. And yet Paul still tells us right here, he says, do this with all authority.

The word is epitage. It means to issue a command, which makes it worse. It's not just that you have authority to say something, it's that he's saying, do this in such a way as you're commanding people.

It's to have a commanding, authoritative tone. Not harsh, but commanding. But the question we have to ask is what is the source of this authority?

[21 : 22] What's the source of it? What kind of authority are we actually appealing to when we speak to others, when we exhort them and when we rebuke them? And before we get to the answer to that, I want to give you three errant ways, three errant ways of viewing spiritual authority.

The first one is this, spiritual authority is not inherent in a church leader. Spiritual authority is not inherent in a church leader.

In other words, we have no power and authority in and of ourselves to issue spiritual commands to others. But there's a lot of people who would have you think otherwise.

There are the self-proclaimed faith healers in the Word of Faith movement. They declare that they possess power in and of themselves over disease and demons and that the only way for you to access that power is if you become one of their disciples and contribute to their ministries.

They claim the power is in them. They claim the power is in what they can do. It's not the only way that this is demonstrated. Roman Catholic traditions do this.

[22 : 36] They believe that there is an endowment on the priest in the Roman Catholic Church to actually convey the forgiveness of sins to those who would come and follow the prescribed recipe for penance and whatever that may be.

You go and you sit in the confession, you tell the priest what you've done, and then the priest conveys forgiveness based on what he tells you to do in that particular moment.

But spiritual authority doesn't belong to the church leader, not in and of himself. But this happens in evangelical circles as well, doesn't it? If you're like me, you've been around a lot of people, legalistic types of people, where pastors act as if their authority is in themselves.

They issue extra biblical commands to the people, and they believe themselves to be above criticism. They exercise the type of authority over others that isn't actually given to them in the Bible.

They demand that before you do anything, you come and get their permission. And if anyone brings criticism to them, they would quote something like, touch not God's anointed. They put themselves above the word.

[23 : 49] They put themselves above the truth. But the problem is, in each of these scenarios, these individuals are claiming for themselves a power that only belongs to Christ. And they manipulate others to believe it in order that they may assume power over them.

But spiritual authority is not inherent in the church leader. Secondly, spiritual authority is not granted to an institution. It's not granted to an institution.

Let's think about Roman Catholicism again, or the Eastern Orthodox traditions, or various cults. They all elevate their institutional authority as either equal to or above the scriptures.

And when there is a conflict between the church and the scriptures, those traditions presume to have authority over the Bible itself, dictating as an institution what people should do and believe.

Some of you, I know you have history with Roman Catholicism, and the basic understanding of authority in the Roman Catholic Church is like a three-legged stool. There's the scriptures, there's the traditions, and then there's the magisterium.

[25 : 01] The church traditions and the magisterium are at least put as equal weight to the scriptures. And whenever the traditions and the scriptures contradict, the ultimate authority belongs to the magisterium, the pope, and the bishops who surround him in order to pass judgment.

He acts as God's representative on earth. That is completely foreign to the Bible. There is no spiritual authority granted to an institution.

Jesus dealt with these people. Mark chapter 7, he said to them, well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, this people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

In vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men, Jesus said.

So that's not what Paul is talking about. He's not saying that the authority belongs to you, Titus. He's not saying the authority belongs to you and the elders as an institution, Titus. The third way this is errantly thought of this, spiritual authority does not belong to the individual self.

[26 : 13] This is the modern secular idea that the only authority I have is me. I do what I feel is right. I determine for myself what's right and what's wrong and any other authority is by nature oppressive.

Well that's not biblical either. So what then is the source of this authority that Paul writes about in chapter 2 in verse 15? There is only one authority from which we can exhort and rebuke and it is the very word of God.

It's the Bible. Our preaching and our teaching and our evangelism and our discipling they're not based on what we think is right or what a religious institution declares is right or certainly what secular ideas think is right.

It is based on the scriptures and the scriptures alone. Think about what Paul said to the Galatians. Remember they were beginning to abandon the true gospel. In Galatians chapter 1 in verse 8 he says but even if we speaking of me and my team or even an angel from heaven were to speak to you a gospel contrary to what we've preached let him be accursed.

In other words the truth isn't the truth because I say it is and the truth isn't the truth because an angel says it is. The truth is the truth because God says it is.

[27 : 34] The authority lies in the word. Think about this in connection with the great commission. Matthew 28 Jesus came to them and said all authority.

Now don't forsake the parallel here. Paul is telling Titus rebuke with all authority. Jesus is saying all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me to Jesus not to Titus.

Go therefore and make disciples baptizing them evangelizing them teaching them to observe all that I have commanded. Now Jesus' authority is intrinsic because he is by his very nature divine.

He is God. He is the source of truth. He is the source of authority. He commissioned the apostles to go but their authority was only an extension of their responsibility to preach his gospel.

To preach his message not their own. Jesus says I say unto you we say thus says the Lord.

[28 : 44] There is a difference there. We are to make disciples by preaching his gospel and teaching his commandments. the authority is not our own. The authority is Christ and we are not to issue our commands but his.

And the place that God has seen fit to reveal his gospel and his commands is not in an institution and it is not within you.

It is in the pages of the Bible. The ultimate authority is the word of God not the one who preaches it. says MacArthur no matter what his training or experience or personal abilities the preacher has spiritual authority only to the extent that what he says conforms to the word of God.

And that applies to each of us. Our authority is only an extension of the word of God. So if we're going around commanding and exhorting and rebuking it better be with our Bibles open.

Not commanding what we think people should do. But what God demands of them and what he reveals to us. When we listen to the authoritative teaching of others we need to make sure it's rooted in the scripture.

[30 : 04] When you receive that counsel from even a trusted family member make sure it's rooted in the scripture. Someone told me recently that their father told them you need to put the Bible down and put your brain on.

that's bad advice. That's the opposite of what we do. It doesn't matter how trusted the person is. Make sure what you heed is the word.

So we see speak the word teach it with authority. Thirdly and finally he says prevent the hearer's contempt. Prevent the hearer's contempt. Verse 15 again declare these things exhort and rebuke with all authority.

Let no one disregard you. Let no one disregard you. So in this final imperative it's the negative. The first two he says do do now he says do not do not let do not permit something.

He's telling him to prevent his hearers from holding the gospel message in contempt. Titus was to authoritatively preach the Bible in such a way that no one could escape its truth.

[31 : 16] Now Brian Chappell helps us here. He says this reminds us that our teaching may be made ineffective either by failing to speak with authority or by failing to live in accord with the scriptures ourselves.

So let's think about that for a moment before we finish. In one sense the statement reflects what will happen if we speak the truth but not in an authoritative way.

Again we're not talking about harshness. We're not talking about speaking truth without grace. We're not even saying speak it without using or endeavoring to use winsome persuasive words and language.

I even think that that's important and even biblical for us to understand. That's not what we're saying. We're not talking about going around barking orders at people. We're talking about saying thus says the Lord engaging with people on the truth of God.

But we must never present the truth of God in such a way that it seems optional. As if the word of God is just one of the options in the midst of many options.

[32 : 23] And in a day of supposed tolerance people will not appreciate it when you talk about the exclusivity of the gospel.

The inerrancy and the authority of the Bible. They won't appreciate that but that's what the Bible actually tells us to do. We command because it is the truth. We can't leave it optional.

It's a warning against limiting the gospel to those who we think would be most tolerant of hearing it. Just because a person rejects God's word either blatantly or out of loyalty to another religion doesn't make them any less accountable to it.

Do you understand what I mean by that? Just because this person is a Muslim doesn't mean that they're not accountable to the truth of God. God's word is not applicable only to Christians.

It's applicable to the whole human race. It is relevant to the whole human race. It must be preached to the whole human race. Not as an option that they might consider but as a command from the God who created them and who demands of them to show his glory.

[33 : 40] Again, it's God's truth not man's. Therefore, we need to speak authoritatively to all people. Well, there's another sense here, let no one disregard you, that parallels what Paul said to Timothy.

In 1 Timothy chapter 4, remember Paul says, let no one despise you for your youth. This is 1 Timothy 4.12, let no one despise you for your youth but set the believers an example in speech and conduct and love and faith and purity.

And he goes on. Well, what was Paul trying to tell Timothy to do? He wasn't saying, Timothy, I know you're a young man so what you're going to have to do is go get the older people in the church. You're going to have to strap them down to a chair and make sure that they listen to what you say.

That's not what he's saying. He's saying, Timothy, don't live with behaviors that are typical of young men your age because you're going to discredit the gospel message that you're preaching.

Instead, set an example for the church and he gives the list of ways that Timothy has to set an example. That's what he's saying to Titus here. Let no one disregard you. He's not saying keep barking at them and force them to sit in the chair and listen to whatever you have to say to give them a piece of your mind.

[34 : 53] That's not what he's saying. He's saying, live in such a way that you don't discredit the gospel message, that people can't easily evade the message you're preaching. We can speak God's word routinely, but if our manner of life is not worthy of respect, what good will our preaching be?

It will be no good. Almost no good. We can speak authoritatively, but who will hear us if our words are harsh and unkind?

generally, people can see through our hypocrisies. They can tell when our thoughts of Christ haven't truly gripped us and consumed us in our lives.

And the last thing people are interested in listening to is a religious lecture from someone who barely seems to be a Christian themselves. Let no one disregard you, church.

don't make God's message optional and live a life that's worthy of the gospel. That's why Paul says to the Philippians, isn't it? Live worthy of the gospel.

[36 : 04] Show obedience and love. Observe the Lord's day to show that you actually love the Lord. You're actually gripped by his truth. You actually care to obey his commands.

Live a life that's consistent with the message that you're preaching. Don't render your teaching ineffective. No one teaches the Bible by accident.

It takes intentionality. It takes a heart level commitment to regularly engage in this kind of discipling. And it's a responsibility that belongs to each of us.

For you parents, this is a responsibility you have first and foremost with your children. grandchildren. You're your grandchildren. You have a responsibility to teach the word. And that's not going to happen accidentally.

It's going to take you caring in those moments to say, I must give the truth of God to my kids. I must train them in righteousness. It's also impossible to speak the truth of God if you don't know the truth of God.

[37 : 12] God, we can't ever expect to obey these commands and to be effective in our ministries to other people if we don't actually know the Bible.

Study the Bible. Read the word. Get all the resources you can to help you understand it the best way that you can. Pray and ask for the Lord to lead you and enlighten you by his Holy Spirit so that you can understand it.

Memorize it. Ingrain it in your heart and your mind not only for your own benefit but for the benefit of others that are in your life. Only then will we care to know it and share it with others.

Only then will we be able to sit down with someone, view their circumstance with an open Bible instead of just an open mind. And the question is simple.

Do you engage in word-based ministry? Tom and I had coffee together the other day in Mooresville and I love it.

[38 : 17] Every now and then when I do something like this I often wonder, I shouldn't think this way, but I often wonder what are the people around us thinking right now because of two of us we're sitting there with our Bibles open and we're working through Romans chapter six together and we weren't being quiet about it and we're just working through the Bible.

You know what we're doing? We're saying hey here's what's going on in our lives. How can we process this through the lens of the scripture? That's what you can do. You sit down with one another and open the Bible.

Say hey I know you're going through this difficult time. Let's look at some encouragement from the scripture. What is the truth about what Christ has done for us? We lift each other's hearts up with the truth.

Not just by saying they're there. It's going to be okay. Right? Are you engaging in this kind of word based ministry? Engage with others but make sure your speech is saturated with the Bible.

Well, let's take a look at some