

January 11, 2016

Principles Of The Dedicated Leader

Titus 1:1a (NASB), **“Paul, a bond servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ.”**

This past weekend here at Calvary Baptist Church we had the great privilege of ordaining Randy Armstrong who is the pastor of Open Range Cowboy Church into the Gospel Ministry. I was privileged to give the charge to the church and I preached from Titus 2:1-10. At home Sunday evening I reread the entire book of Titus and was blessed by how this book not only speaks to pastors but also how it speaks to the church in general. As we are just beginning this New Year with our focus being on the Bible and specifically what the Bible has to say about how we live our lives and how we function within the Body of Christ, I felt compelled to begin a series on this wonderful epistle.

Paul is the author of this letter and he writes to Titus who was a protégé of Paul's and was by this point a pastor on the Island of Crete. The message of this short epistle is very similar to the letters that Paul wrote to Timothy and served much the same purpose which was to strengthen a young pastor. The letter to Titus was designed to give instruction to Titus and also to the elders on Crete who were under the leadership of Titus and also to the members of the various congregations. Chapter 1 focuses on the qualifications for leadership with special focus on their theology and personal character and conduct. Chapter 2 turns the focus to the character and conduct of church members and chapter 3 focuses on the character and conduct of both leaders and members before the unbelieving world in which they lived and to which they witness. All three of those areas of concern are essential to the real purpose of the letter, which was to build strong churches that would be effective in evangelism. The letter presents for us a compact guide to the kind of Christian ministry and personal Christian living that leads the unconverted to salvation. Ultimately this is an evangelistic letter whose purpose was to prepare the church to be more effective in evangelism. As we look forward to this year this is what our entire purpose is returning to God's Word, so that we will be effective in evangelism.

You see the saving truth of the gospel message is completely nullified if those who are proclaiming it are living ungodly lives that show no evidence of redemption. When so called “Christians” live in open sin, they should not then expect non-believers to listen to or give much credence to the message that supposedly saves people from sin. One of our most compelling testimonies that we can give is that of righteous, holy, and self-sacrificial living.

With this in mind let's begin by looking at an often overlooked part of any epistle which is the greeting or salutation. In this very deep and rich greeting the apostle gives here he reveals to us five foundational principles on which the service of every dedicated leader in Christ's church must be built.

The first principle is a commitment to God's mastery. Paul viewed himself as a man who was totally and completely under divine authority. He identifies himself here as **“a bond-servant of God.”**

Paul could have chosen to identify himself in many different ways: as a brilliant scholar, a highly educated Jewish leader who also had learned Greek literature and philosophy. He could have flaunted his Roman citizenship which was something that was extremely valuable in that day. He could have boasted of his very unique calling to the Gentiles, and he could have boasted of his full privilege and authority alongside the twelve apostles. He could have boasted of his being **“caught up to the third heaven... into Paradise”** (2 Corinthians 12:2,4), or of his gift of miracles, and of being the human author of much of the Scriptures of the New Testament. Instead of all of that, he chose to identify himself as a **“bond-servant of God.”**

The Greek word for **“bond-servant”** is *doulos* and it is the word used for slave. This refers to the most servile person in the culture of Paul's day. You see Paul was in complete yet willing submission and bondage to **“God.”** Paul had no life that he could call his own, no will of his own, no purpose of his own, or plan of his own. Everything in Paul's life was subject to the Lord Jesus Christ, to **“God.”** In every thought, breath, and effort he was under the absolute authority of **“God.”** This line of thinking is so antithetical to the modern church in which God is seen as some mystical genie who is here just to fulfill our needs. In the modern church the roles are reversed, God is the *doulos* to us! We are to come to God completely emptied of self and then He fills us with Himself.

There is a general sense in which every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has as Paul said in Romans 6:22, **“been freed from sin and enslaved God,”** a bondage that results **“in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.”** To truly be a Christian one is to be **“a bond-servant of God.”** We are no longer our own but as it says in 1 Corinthians 6:20 we **“have been bought with a price,”** being as it says in 1 Peter 1:18-19 **“redeemed [not] with perishable things like silver or gold... but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”** Since we no longer have ownership of ourselves it says in 2 Corinthians 5:15 that we **“should no longer live for [ourselves], but for Him who died and rose again on [our] behalf.”**

What was Paul's specific duty to his master the Lord Jesus? He was **“an apostle of Jesus Christ.”** Even as the old apostle neared the end a very blessed and fruitful life, he was still focused on the desire to be an obedient *doulos*. In fact his apostleship had brought increased levels of faithfulness, submission, and often very great sacrifice.

Nonetheless, Paul considered it a very great privilege to be in bondage to God and he viewed his suffering as nothing but a blessing. We are to view our lives in the exact same fashion but I know in my own life I have far too often just given the Lord what I have left over. In Philippians 2:17 Paul wrote, **“even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.”** In Acts 20:24 he said to the elders from Ephesus, **“I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I**

may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.”

The word *apostolos* (“**apostle**”) carried with it the basic meaning of “messenger” and it was sometimes used of even the lowliest person who carried a message for someone else. Most often though the term was used to describe someone who was a special messenger, an ambassador, who was sent with a specific message and spoke with the authority of one who had sent him. The authority of the message then did not derive from the messenger but rather from the sender. Just as I said last Sunday morning in our closing prayer, I have no authority, my words have no authority, but the one who sent me does have authority. Therefore as long as I stay faithful to God’s Word the message then has authority. This is why I believe so strongly in expository preaching.

All truly effective, fruitful, and genuinely spiritual leaders in Christ’s church have a deep awareness that they are under divine authority. This awareness then becomes the controlling reality in their lives. The result then is that they do not seek to fulfill personal agendas, create personal fame, or build personal empires. They are content and feel honored for the privilege of being wholly subject to the Master who has chosen and sent them.