



July 22, 2018

Titus 1:1-4

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The Gospel and Good Works

Hi Everyone. My name is Larry Adams and I want to take a moment to thank you for reading this message. At Golden Hills we are committed to exalting Jesus and preaching the Word. Your downloading of this message is a great encouragement to us, as we know that our ministry is going out to spread God's Word all over the world.

We want you to know, too, that in no way do we intend these messages to be a replacement for your involvement in a good local church, where, sitting under the authority of pastors and other teachers, you can learn to worship, grow and serve and be engaged with a body of believers where you can grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We realize also, that some of you may be in areas of the world where there is no local church. Therefore, we hope these messages you are using, to gather with your family or other believers, or people from the community that it will be a great encouragement to you, as you hear God speak into your life, helping you to become disciples who are true, reproducing followers of Jesus Christ.

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If you have your Bible today, we're beginning a new series in the book of Titus, called *Devoted: The Gospel and Good Works*. Paul was writing to Titus, a young man he had led to Christ and left on the Island of Crete in the Mediterranean. He had left him there with a specific purpose. Part of the purpose was to help people to learn that there is a direct connection between what we believe and how we live. On the island, there were a number of people who were certainly talking the talk, but not walking the walk. There was a disconnect between the gospel and good works. They were not devoted to Jesus. So he wrote this letter to help Titus to teach people, if they are devoted to Christ, what that will look like in how they live.

This is the way he begins the letter, Titus 1:1-4

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—² in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,³ and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,

⁴ To Titus, my true son in our common faith:

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Let's pray together: *God, this little book is so timely. It's amazing how similar our world is today, to what Titus was facing on the Island of Crete. Churches that were watering down the word, false gospels that were abounding, people that were not living what they professed. Real devotion is something that is seen. It cannot be falsified and it cannot be hidden. I'm praying today, God, that in the time we spend in this little book, You will help us to see even more clearly what it means to be devoted to Jesus Christ, the gospel and the good works that flow from a life that has been transformed. And we'll thank You, God, for all that You'll show us, in Jesus' name, amen.*

Real devotion is not hard to see. You know, soccer is an international phenomenon. It is the passion of many countries. But you'd be hard-pressed to find a fan more devoted than was demonstrated in this most recent World Cup. There is a guy by the name of Ali Demerkaiah. He lives in Turkey. They call him "Yamuch Ali" which is Turkish for "Crazy Ali." He is well-known in his area for his passionate fandom of his local football club. So ardent was his fandom, this article said, that Ali had been banned from the stadium for a year due to the misdemeanors from a previous fan-related incident. So on the day of the important match against a rival team, Ali found a solution. He rented a crane! Then he lifted it high enough to see over the stadium wall. "The match was very important to our team," he explained to a local newspaper, "I had to go to the police station, and sign a paper to show that I agreed not to watch the match "in" the stadium. Then I quickly went out and rented this crane." Social media in the area was full of pictures of a jubilant Ali, cheering from high upon his perch. Ultimately, police were summoned. Ali was forced to lower the crane. Nevertheless, he said, It all ended on a high note for him. The stunt only cost him \$86 to rent the crane. He wasn't cited or fined by the authorities, and, he said, "Our team won! Five to nothing!"

Now, people who know Ali Demerkaiah, know that he is devoted to his soccer team. His devotion is evidenced by the great lengths he is willing to go to, to support them, even when he is told he can't.

Real devotion cannot be hidden. It is evidenced by how we live. It's rooted in what we believe, and what we value. When we're devoted to someone or something, it shows. It occupies our thoughts and actions, and our priorities. As Paul is going to relate to Titus, that's especially true when a person is devoted to Jesus Christ and to the gospel.

We're beginning a new series of messages today called *Devoted: the Gospel and Good Works*. This is the focus of Paul's letter to Titus. Titus was a young man with whom Paul had a close, affectionate, father-son type relationship. He wrote in verse 4,

⁴ To Titus, my true son in our common faith:

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

The language there indicates that Titus was a young man whom Paul had led to Christ himself. They had a very close relationship. Titus is first mentioned by Paul in Galatians 2:1 --

Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. ² I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles.

For fourteen years Paul had been preaching the gospel. He was summoned to Jerusalem by way of a revelation to go there and make defense of the gospel he was preaching among the Gentiles. There were some Judaizers, some of the circumcision group who said that salvation comes by faith in Jesus, following the Mosaic Law and having the sign of circumcision as evidence of compliance. Paul was going around telling people the truth: It isn't "Jesus plus." Jews and Gentiles alike are saved by grace through faith alone. It is not by circumcision. It is not by the law of Moses. He brought Titus along as his object to teach that truth. For, he said, here is this young man Titus, a Greek, a non-Jew, a Gentile – who is in love with Jesus Christ, saved by the gospel, doing the good works of God. The Holy Spirit is evidenced in his life. He is neither circumcised nor a Jew. He is evidence and proof that the gospel I preach is the truth.

Just the fact that Paul took this young man, Titus, up to Jerusalem to make his defense and to present his gospel, shows how much confidence Paul had in Titus, and the maturity of this young man, whom

he would leave on the Island of Crete. Titus appears again in Paul's third missionary journey as a trusted co-worker with Paul at Ephesus. From that city, Paul sent Titus out on at least three occasions for missions to Corinth. On one of those, he had the precious job of delivering the letter that we now know as 2 Corinthians. Nothing more is heard of Titus in the scriptures until the time of Paul's writing this short letter that bears his name. Paul writes to Titus, whom he left on the Island of Crete. They had been serving there together on that island in the Mediterranean. The reason Paul left him, he made clear in Titus 1:5 – ⁵ "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you."

Titus 1:10 --

¹⁰ For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group. ¹¹ They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain.

Titus 1:16 – ¹⁶ "They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good."

Put in order, Paul told them, what was left unfinished. The Cretan churches were in a sad spiritual condition. They lacked leadership. There were numerous false teachers. The moral standards of Cretan society, which were so low, were beginning to creep into the church. God has always intended that the church would have such an influence, that the world would start looking like the church. But on Crete, the church was beginning to look like the world. That's exactly what's happening in our own country.

So Paul sent Titus there and left him behind, so he would teach them about living for the sake of the gospel and the glory of Jesus. The gospel that they were preaching in the churches there was distorted. It was a gospel of works, not grace. It was a gospel of "Jesus Plus" – Jesus plus Moses, Jesus plus circumcision, Jesus plus the law. Any time you hear a gospel that says you need Jesus plus something else to be saved, you are not hearing the true gospel. Jesus alone is the savior. His sacrifice is sufficient.

Besides all of that, the gospel of grace was being so mis-taught, that people thought they could confess Christ and live however they wanted. It sounds something like this: *No, I can live however I want because God's grace forgives me, so there is no need for holiness, no need for obedience, no need for consecration, no need to live apart from the world. God's grace allows me to live any way I want.* They say no connection between the gospel and good works. They claimed devotion to God, but by their actions they denied Him. There was a disconnect between the one they were professing, and how they were living. Paul would encourage Titus to remind people that the grace of God teaches us to say "no" to sin and "yes" to godliness.

He would go on to say in Titus 2:11-14 –

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 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, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who 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.

No less than six times Paul will say in this short letter, the importance of the good works that flow from a life that is devoted to Jesus and the gospel. There is a direct connection, he said, between the gospel and how you live.

So Paul tells Titus that he was going to send two young men, Artemas and Tychicus, to relieve Titus at some point so that Titus could leave Crete and come to join Paul at Nicopolis, to continue their ministry together. But, until those guys arrive, in the meantime, I want you (as he outlines in this letter) to model, teach and stress to everyone the connection between devotion to Christ and the gospel and good works. He tells Titus in 3:8,

⁸ This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

As Paul reminds Titus, **the gospel will be lived out in good works that flow from those who are devoted to Christ and the gospel.**

The question is, where does this devotion come from? How is it seen? How do you have it? Why do some people have it and others don't? Paul will relate in this opening section, the source of his own devotion: having to know who you are in Christ and why you exist. And this devotion flows out of knowing what you believe and why you believe it.

People devoted to Christ and the gospel have good works that flow from knowing who they are in Christ and why they exist.

Paul said, (1:1) "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness."

I don't know if I'll ever forget the look on the face of this man I was called to visit in his home by his wife. Years ago, his wife was a member of our church, a great follower of Jesus, but her husband was not. He was struggling with something at home and she asked if I would come by to talk to him. When I got there, he wasted no time telling me his issue. This is how he started the conversation, "Larry, who am I? I don't mean what's my name, or who I'm married to, or what I do for a job. I need to know who am I. I also need to know why I'm here. What is my purpose on the planet? I need to know where I'm going. Where does this all end?"

I sat there thinking, wow, those are life's three fundamental questions. Here's a guy who doesn't know the answer to any of them. So I told him,

"Who are you? Well, you are a person created by God and in the image of God. You were placed here for a purpose."

"Why are you here? To know God and to make Him known, and to fulfill God's eternal purpose for you, in the good works that He created in advance for you to do. "

"Where are you going? There are only two ultimate destinations: to heaven to live in eternal life in relationship with God, OR you're going to hell to live in eternal death and eternal separation from Him. There is no other choice. Right now, you're headed for hell because of your sin, and you are separated from God in that sin, and you are living in spiritual death." I told him, "You are empty because you don't know God. You are aimless because you are living your life with no meaningful purpose."

Do you know how many people there are, living like that? How many people who don't know what their real identity is, or where they came from? Do you know how many people right now cannot tell you the real purpose for why they are on the planet. Or even with any certainty, what their eternity holds, which is why they are scrambling around, with so many false ideas on how to protect their eternity.

People, Christians are not immune. I don't mean this critically at all, because I'm guilty of it in my own life at times. We don't live like we were created in the image of God. We're not living the purpose for which God put us on the planet. Many don't even have the assurance of the future of their eternity.

So I shared the gospel with this guy. I'm happy to tell you, this big, stubborn, self-reliant man eventually surrendered his life to Christ. But then began a process. So I told him, now you have to learn about your new identity, how to live as a new creation in Christ.

Paul told the Corinthian church (2 Cor 5:14-17) --

¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Paul told the Galatian church (Gal 2:20), ²⁰ "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

You notice, Paul didn't say, "I'm not just living for myself any more." He said, "I don't live any more. I died. Now, Christ lives in me. And the life I'm living is not mine; it's His, lived in me."

Paul lived a life devoted to the gospel and good works because he knew who he was in Christ and why he lived as a Christian. (Titus 1:1), "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness."

Paul said, "I'm a servant of God." The word is "doulos," it's the word for "slave." I am a slave to Jesus. I am a servant of God.

Many people want to be considered a slave. Very few want to be treated like one. This word, doulos, is a word that indicates a submission without bondage. This is a willing subjection to slavery, to someone or something. Paul didn't live to serve himself any more; he lived as a willing servant of Jesus.

That's true for every believer. When you come to Christ and you give Him your life. You die. He comes alive in you. So, from that point on, it doesn't matter what I want. It matters what He wants. I am the clay and He is the potter. He can do with me as He chooses. Paul said I am a servant of God and I'm an apostle of Jesus Christ. "Apostle" means "one sent forth," in this case, sent forth by Jesus. If you want to realize how Paul had that sending, read Acts 9.

An apostle had, among other things, been an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ, which is why there are no real apostles today. They were the foundation. Their teaching is what the foundation is of the

church, God's word, the apostles' teaching. Paul always referred to himself as the least of the apostles because he had been a persecutor of Christ and His church, and he once wrote to Timothy (1 Timothy 1:12-14) –

¹² I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. ¹³ Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. ¹⁴ The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

You don't need to answer this audible, but I'm asking you – Are you a Christian today? Are you a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ? Because if you are, that grace that was poured out on Paul, has been poured out on you, along with the faith and the love that are in Christ Jesus. Now, when you know that God has done this for you, it changes who you are. It changes how you live. Paul said, this is who I am: a servant of God, willingly surrendered to do His will, by His grace an apostle, sent by Jesus Himself to testify to the good news of the gospel and salvation for all who believe. You and I are no different. We're not apostles, but we are disciples. We are to be disciples. Disciples are reproducing followers of Jesus.

Do you know there is no concept in the New Testament of someone who is content to simply believe and be a follower? It is expected that a true follower of Jesus would desire to see the life in them reproduced in someone else. God is reproducing Himself in us, into the lives of others.

You can't be devoted to that unless you know who you really are. First and foremost, we need to know we are children of God. John said (1:12) –

¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Paul told the Romans in Romans 8:14-16 --

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. [If you've received that Spirit, God has become your Abba, your Father, your Daddy.] ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

John went on to write in 1 John 3:1a – "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"

People, I've mentioned to you before, I've never seen a picture, I don't know anything about, I've never met him. I only have the name of my biological father. I have no idea who he is. Do you know how much it means to me to know that God is my father? He is your father, too, if you are one of His children in Christ Jesus. That's who you are!

More than that, you are also a witness. Remember what He told them in Acts 1:8 ⁸ "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Witnesses to His death, burial and resurrection. Witnesses to the gospel. That wasn't just for them. It was for all of us. That's what we are.

Since we are children of God, and since we are witnesses to Christ and the resurrection, then we have become ambassadors – Christ’s presence in the world, representing His interests. He is actually working in us to accomplish that.

2 Corinthians 5:18-6:1 (The letter that Paul had Titus deliver) –

¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

6 As God’s co-workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain.

Children of God, witnesses, ambassadors, co-workers – that’s who we are.

We have a transition coming up in our church. Many of you have heard about it. Next summer, Phil Ward may be taking over the role of lead pastor here. I am very excited about that. He is an excellent leader. I’m not tired, worn out or anything else. It’s just time for me to do something else. I remember my daughter asked me, “What would you do if you weren’t the pastor at Golden Hills?” I said, “Kimie, I love being the pastor there. It’s the role I’ve had for 35 years and I’ve done the best I know how to do, but the bottom line is – my identity is not wrapped up in being the pastor at Golden Hills. I am a child of God. I am a witness to Christ and the resurrection. I am an ambassador for Jesus. I will have many roles in my life. But my identity will never change.”

So whether you are a butcher, baker or candlestick maker, a housewife or whatever you do – you may have many avocations, but your vocation is related to your identity as a child of God, a witness, an ambassador and a co-worker with Jesus. That’s who we are. That’s who I am. That’s not going to change. (applause)

Paul said, to “further the faith of God’s elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.” To further the faith is literally “for the sake of” the faith. The elect are those whom God has chosen before the foundation of the world. To be holy and blameless in His sight, to be adopted as His son.

Paul said, I am teaching the truth in order to strengthen their faith and help them to grow, because it is this truth that leads to godliness. You see, it isn’t enough just that we come to Christ. We are to become like Him. We are to grow in godliness. Not that we are God or ever will be, but we are to be like Him in character and conduct. In fact, more and more of His life is to be lived out through us. More and more of His priorities. More and more of His will. More and more of His good works.

There is a huge difference between someone who says I am a Christian and someone who is godly. That’s why I used to tell my girls, when they were growing up – don’t ever settle for some guy who says he is a Christian. You pray, and ask God to send you a godly man, someone who is growing in the truth and learning to be like Jesus.

Paul said this is why I’m on the planet. I’m a servant of God. I’m an apostle sent by Jesus, for the sake of the elect, giving them the truth that leads to the kind of godliness that makes people be like Him.

This is why I'm here. All of this, so we can live in a relationship with God and fulfill God's purpose, by completing the work God gave us to do. Remember what Paul told the Ephesians (2:8-9) "⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast."

We're not saved by works – but what? (vs 10) We are saved to do good works, for we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. This is what we were created for.

So Paul tells Titus in 3:8

⁸ This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

Not only those who know their identity in Christ and why they exist, **People devoted to Christ and the gospel do good works that flow from knowing what they believe and why they believe it.**

Paul said in Titus 1:2-4

² in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, ³ and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,

⁴ To Titus, my true son in our common faith:

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Many people are not sure of what they believe or why. I meet people like that, whenever they come to my door. Young Mormon missionary kids who are out there, and the Jehovah's Witness people. Most of them who come to the door are sincere, but once you get them beyond the veneer of what they've been taught to say to the usual questions, their faith isn't very deep or secure in most of them. Like a lot of Christian kids are – they believe it, but they're not sure what and they're not sure why. So, when they come to the door and I'm talking to them, I know they are there because they are required to do a mission for a couple of years as part of their salvation process. So I let them tell me all about their Jesus and all about their church and all about the book of Mormon and how great Joseph Smith is and all this stuff. Then, somewhere along the line, I'll ask them the question, "Why do you believe that? Why do you believe what you just told me?"

Very often they'll say, "Well, because I believe the Bible, or I believe the book of Mormon or I believe my parents, or my church teaches this." Or in the case of Mormons, they say, "I had this burning in my bosom and I believe the gospel."

I say, "Well, the Jesus you're advocating isn't in the Bible I'm holding. Secondly, what you're telling me then, is that your faith is rooted in a book written by men, or in the faith of your parents, or what your church has told you, or some feeling that you have."

I'll say to them, "Do you know why I know that the Jesus I am telling you about, is the true Jesus, and yours isn't? Do you know why the gospel I'm giving you is truth, and I know it is the truth? Because my faith is not rooted in a book written by men. It's not rooted in what my church teaches. It's not rooted in

what my parents told me, and it's not rooted in some deceptive feeling that comes and goes. I know the Jesus I'm telling you about, and the gospel I'm giving you is true – because I got it from God Himself. He wrote it in this book. This is why I believe.”

And I can take the false Jesus they're presenting to me, and I can take them into this word and show them that the Jesus they just told me about is not the God of the Bible you think you're following. Our faith, our devotion, is rooted in the truth.

Paul reminded Titus that his devotion to the gospel and good works was rooted in what he believed and why he believed it. Paul said his devotion was rooted in God and His word. He said in verse 2

² in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,
³ and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior

It's the hope of eternal life. People, our hope is only as solid as the object of our hope. Paul's hope and devotion was rooted in Christ. Paul said his hope of eternal life – life the way God has life – was rooted in the person of God and His word. That's why he said, “² in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised.” God is the source of this truth. God IS the truth. Truth is not God. God is truth. He is the resident source of all truth. Satan is a liar, and the father of lies.

That's why when people come to my door and they're telling me about a false Jesus and a false gospel – I know right away that Satan is using their mouth to promote that falsehood. When I speak the true Jesus and the true gospel back to them, God is using my mouth to speak the truth to them.

That's why, when I lie, I now know Satan is using my mouth for his purpose. That's why I need to speak truth in everything, because when I speak truth, God is using my mouth for His purpose. God who does not lie – is the source of what I believe (Paul said).

God's word is eternal. This hope I have of eternal life comes from a God who does not lie and He promised it before the beginning of time. In eternity past, God spoke this word of unchanging truth. It was a promise. In fact, the word there means a summons, it's a legal term meaning once issued, this is a word that will be an irreversibly done deal. It's not going to change.

God spoke before the dawn of time that those who put their hope in this God who does not lie, and in this word He has given us, will have eternal life. That's our hope. He has brought this word to light, he said, manifested at this present time, through the preaching that is entrusted to me by the command of God our savior. It has come at this present time, in this season. In “kairos” is the word – “for such a time as this,” God gave His word in eternity past so that right now, Titus, we would have the word we need to address the lies that are going on in Crete. Our faith is rooted in God who is the truth and whose word is eternal.

God has revealed this word, this promise of life, in His Son. Jesus is the word. John 1:1 and 14:

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

That's why the writer of Hebrews said in Hebrews 1:1-3a --

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

Jesus is the very revelation of God's word.

And this revelation of Jesus has been written down in the scriptures. The scriptures are the written word, the revelation of the living word. All scripture is God-breathed. Men held the pen, but God did the writing. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

God not only superintended the writing, He superintended the transmission. Peter said (2 Peter 1:19-21)

¹⁹ We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Paul understood that Titus, or anyone else, could never be devoted to a God they didn't know. They were never going to be devoted to a gospel that was simply rooted in human understanding. But to know who you are and what you have, and the things you believe are rooted in a God who does not lie, who spoke it from eternity past, who brought it to light in this season for the preaching and teaching so people could know the truth – that changes the way you live.

That's why he told Titus in Titus 2:15, "¹⁵ These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you."

Titus 3:8 -

⁸ This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

People, this is why I would never want to be in a church that did not teach the word and make it central. The last three weeks when we were gone, we visited other churches. The first thing I watch for when the guy gets up there to speak is, is the word of God central to what I'm about to hear? Is this guy going to tell me the text from which God is going to speak? If the guy gets up there and doesn't have a Bible, and he is not using the scriptures, then he is just flapping his jaws. I can tell you, that what I'm about to hear, most likely, is going to be the opinion of men and not the word of God.

Paul said, Titus, one of the reasons the churches are in despair is they need to be taught the word. They need to know what they believe and why they believe it. I want you to teach this and model it. It's good for everyone. God wants us to be devoted, so, Titus, show them what that looks like.

There are so few examples of true devotion, that when you come across one, it sticks with you. I was reading about a couple in New Zealand, Michael and Linda Joyce. Michael is 68 and Linda is 64. Michael has Alzheimer's. It has gotten to the point that he doesn't remember any more that he is married to Linda. But, he knows that this lady is in his house as a caretaker, and he said, "I've fallen in love with her, and if she is going to be in my house, we should be married." So, apparently recently, Michael proposed to Linda. Linda said yes. She said, "You don't say, 'We're already married.' I said, 'Of course I will,' thinking he might not even remember." But the next morning, Michael Joyce woke up and said to her, "So, when are we going to do this?" So they set a date. Linda invited their friends and family. This is what she told them in the invitation:

My adored husband of 38 years suffers from Alzheimer's Dysphasia. Two nights ago, out of the blue, with tear-filled eyes, he asked me to marry him. Michael had clearly forgotten we were already married, but I absolutely went along with it. I said I'd be delighted to be his wife. In spite of his confused mind, he obviously knows and feels this is something he really wants to do. To Michael it will be our wedding day. To our friends and myself, a truly precious, memorable occasion.

On their wedding morning, Linda wasn't sure he would even remember, but he woke up and told her, "Today is the day!" The beaming couple, originally from Scotland, exchanged vows at a scenic lake near their home as friends looked on. Linda said, "There has been a lot of sadness and frustration in our lives, but despite all the foginess, today has been pure joy."

When I read that story, I thought – that's what devotion looks like. You don't say, "Oh, you knucklehead! We've been married for 38 years! You're losing your mind!" You simply say, "Of course I'll marry you." It was important to him, so it was important to her. Her devotion was seen, not just in how she cares for him, but in how she cares about what he wants.

That's what devotion to Jesus is supposed to look like. No matter how long we've known Him, we come to a place where we say, you know what, Lord? What You want matters more to me than what I want. So whatever You are asking of me, no matter how ridiculous it looks, I want to say, yes of course I will.

You're not going to do that unless you know who you are in Christ, and why you're here, and what you believe and why you believe it.

I'm looking forward to this study together in this book because Paul is going to, through Titus, teach all of us devoted to Jesus what that really looks like in every role He might ask us to fulfill. Paul said, "this is a trustworthy statement and I want you to stress these things so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone."

God, I have much to learn, but I want to learn it. I feel in many ways, like I'm just beginning, but I'm grateful that You are there every step of the way. Thank You for allowing me and my family to be in a church with so many people who are truly devoted to You, and it shows by the way they live. They know who they are. They know why they are here, and they know who they believe and what they believe and why they believe it. I'm praying, God, You'll increase our number and keep us strong in the days ahead. And that our church will remain faithful to You, helping the world around us to come more

in line with the gospel instead of the church becoming more like the world. And God, may people see this kind of devotion – not for our glory but for Yours. We can't do it, but You can. We can't even do these works. These are the works that flow out of a life in which You are living; works that testify to our devotion to Jesus and the gospel. As this letter unfolds, may it have an impact on us as it did for Titus. May we be truly devoted. We'll thank You, in Your precious name, Amen.