

Titus 1:1-9

When Christians Are Like Christ

Mahatma Gandhi was a national icon who led the struggle for India's independence from British colonial rule. His teachings empowered tens of millions of common Indians. Throughout his life he opposed any form of terrorism or violence, instead using only the philosophy of nonviolence.

From the time he took charge of the freedom struggle and the Indian National Congress in 1918, he was lovingly revered as "Mahatma", or "Great Soul" by millions of Indians. He is revered by many in India as Bapu of "Father of the Nation."

As you travel through India today you'll see Gandhi's quotes about life and religion posted all over public buildings.

Gandhi loved the Gospels and regularly quoted from the teachings of Jesus.

What troubled him was the lives of Christians that he met.

Once when the missionary E. Stanley Jones met with Gandhi he asked him, "Mr. Gandhi, though you quote the words of Christ often, why is that you appear to so adamantly reject becoming his follower?"

Gandhi replied, "Oh, I don't reject your Christ. I love your Christ. It's just that so many of you Christians are so unlike your Christ."
Although Gandhi misunderstood some of Jesus' teachings, overall his point was well taken.

Some times the biggest obstacle for people becoming Christians is Christians. I'm sure we can all take ownership of that.

But isn't it interesting that God's solution to the problem isn't to kind of wave a divine magic wand and turn all believers into model saints.

God could, by a sovereign act of His will, produce instant character and godliness as soon as we put our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior.

Instead, God in His wisdom, decided that he would rebuild us. After giving us new life, eternal life – He starts fixing our character by tearing us down and rebuilding us up more and more in His image.

We all struggle at times with living lives that would be a good example of how Jesus would want us to live.

What's the answer? How do we tap into what God really wants for us?

Today we're starting a study of the New Testament book of Titus. **Turn to pg 1058**

This fairly short letter that we call Titus was written by an Apostle named Paul to a young man named Titus.

As the notes in my study Bible put it, "Titus, a young pastor, had the unenviable assignment of setting things in order in the church at Crete."

The reason they call this an "unenviable assignment" is because of the conditions on Crete.

Actually in some ways they weren't that different from the conditions in our country today.

Crete is located southeast of Greece in the Mediterranean. It's a large island about 160 x 35 miles. In Paul's day it had hundreds of cities which were all fiercely independent.

Epimenides was a philosopher from Crete who wrote all Cretians are "liars, evil beasts, slow bellies" and "always brigands, piratical, unjust."

There's a philosophical paradox named after Epimenides called "The Epimenides paradox."

If Epiminedes was a Creation and he said all Cretians were liars was he telling the truth or lying? We'll leave that one for the philosophers to figure out.

Anyway, even the people from Crete recognized it was a pretty ungodly place.

On the day of Pentecost, after Jesus' resurrection, Cretan Jews were in Jerusalem and heard the message of God's forgiveness and then went back home and shared it with their fellow countrymen.

A bunch of Cretans became believers. They trusted Christ as Savior. Churches were established but the people in the congregations had a lot of growing to do.

So Paul is sending Titus to set things in order and to teach the people.

That means this book gives us some ways to help us deal with the our old nature and help our churches reflect more the character of Jesus Christ.

This letter was probably written just after 1 Timothy. Paul and Titus had traveled together and had gone to Crete. Paul eventually moved on and left Titus behind. Titus was like Timothy in that he was a protégé Paul was training for ministry work.

Titus wasn't a pastor of a specific church or over all the churches on the island. He was Paul's apostolic representative – and so carried a lot more weight. Paul wrote the letter to give Titus more authority and instructions on what to do.

There were three major influences on Crete that caused problems for the church and for young Christians. First it was a training center for Roman soldiers. Second Crete was a stopping off point for ships crossing the Mediterranean. Third, there was a large population of Jews on the island. Jews who wanted Christians to follow Jewish law and custom before they came to Christ.

So you have brutal violence being accepted because of the Roman soldiers, a riotous lifestyle because of the sailors, and the culture of legalism demanded by the Jewish Christians.

It doesn't sound too far off from our day, does it? Where do you begin?

The message that Paul is going to communicate to Titus is How to live a Godly life in a godless world. The idea is this: My faith must download into the way I live or it's not really believed. It has to show up in my palm pilot and my checkbook. It's not enough to just talk about my faith, it must impact and change the way I live. Godliness must show up in our churches, in our homes and in our world.

I. To Live Out Our Faith We Need To Know Who We Really Are

Read vs 1-4

If you notice these 4 verses are one sentence. It starts with the word “Paul” and the period doesn't come till the end of the word “Savior.”

In one way Paul starts off just like any other first century letter writer, he identifies himself. We'd start the letter “Dear Titus,” and end with our signature. In the first

century you started with your name first, which makes a whole lot more sense.

But then this apostle does something that's not so common. He calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ.

The word he uses in the original means "bondservant." We'd say slave.

Slavery was a big deal in the Roman Empire. There were millions of slaves used for everything from laborers, to gladiators, to teachers. Some slaves had it rough and some did pretty well.

But there was one thing all slaves had in common, they weren't Roman citizens. Roman citizens had rights and privileges. Slaves were the property of their owners.

Paul was a freeborn Roman citizen. But he did something no other Citizen would do, he used the title "slave." He used it and he used it proudly. He was a willing slave of the God of the universe.

Notice he was slave first, and apostle second.

Now he could have started off Paul, a brilliant scholar; the highly educated Jewish leader. Or Paul who has all the authority because He's God's chosen one and those things would have been true.

But I believe he started this letter this way because he wanted to be an example to Titus. "Titus, if you're really going to influence other people, if you're really going to impact peoples lives for God's kingdom the you have to have God's kind of attitude."

What was God's attitude? The Lord of the universe, the Lord of Glory, *"...Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!"* Philippians 2:5-8

God became a servant to us! God came as Jesus Christ to give his life on a cross for us.

That's the mentality we're to have if we want to be Christians that are like Christ.

Now of course, God came in humility but He was still God. The humility part was to serve us through the cross. But even then, God didn't stop being God. He had all authority.

So Paul writes I'm a servant but I'm also an Apostle. In other words, I'm here to serve people, but I'm here to do it God's way. I'm here as a representative of God's truth.

We've talked about truth a lot the past couple of weeks when we looked at the epistles of second and third John. Here comes that same theme again.

God's truth is based on faith, is according to godliness, and has its end in eternal life.

And look at the claim, in verse 2., eternal life was promised by God before time began. In other words God's promises are eternal themselves.

"But," verse 3, at the right time God chose to bring His promises to us. And here's how, through Paul's preaching. That word doesn't mean the act of preaching. It means the content.

The promise of eternal life, based on the truth of God, was committed to Paul and Paul's committing it to Titus.

That's the claim of the entire Bible, that it's God's message being given through human authors.

Later in his life when Gandhi was asked whether he was a Hindu, he replied: "Yes I am. I am also a Christian, a Muslim, a Buddhist and a Jew".

His philosophy was, you can find truth in all religions. The problem was he looked at a few ethical teachings and left out all the rest.

You can't be an honest Hindu and accept biblical Christianity. You can't be an honest Muslim and accept the teachings of Buddhism.

These are religious systems that have contradictory views of God and truth.

So how do we know who to believe? In fact, how do we know if any of them are true?

We have to go back to the writings. Back to the Koran, back to the Bhagavad Gita, back to the Bible.

All claim to contain God's truth. If we're talking about the promise of eternal life we'd better make sure we get it right.

And I believe that the Bible stands the scrutiny while the others fall. Actually you can take just one area, fulfilled prophecy and you can see the absolute accuracy of the Bible. No other religious book has it.

So the authority is the commandment of God our savior.

That's how we know who we really are.

The Bible is so clear. God is the master and we are the servants. Unfortunately we're rebellious servants who have chosen our way over our masters. The bible calls that sin.

In fact it says the wages of sin is death, meaning separation from God forever.

But God became a servant to the servants by taking our punishment in Christ.

Now, when we put our trust in Him we're forgiven and restored to the family of God. We have the promise of eternal life.

That's who we are. We're people who have received Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.

And notice, the Bible says God our Savior in verse 3 and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior in verse 4 because they're one and the same.

I. To Live Out Our Faith We Need To Know Who We Really Are

II. To Live Our Faith We Need To Know What God Requires

Read vs 5

God is a God of order and design. From the universe to an atom. From society, to the family, to the church, God's got a pattern.

When we violate God's pattern we have trouble. It happens in society, it happens in our homes, and it happens in our churches.

It's so important the we know what God's what God's pattern is. For the church it's summed up in the introduction to the book of Philippians. There Paul writes: *"Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons."*

The three aspects of the structure of a New Testament church were, the saints, the overseers, and the deacons. All of those are in the plural.

“Saints” is the New Testament word for the congregation. Some denominations use the word “saint” to apply to a person who was particularly holy. For instance The Catholic church has canonized around 3,000 people in the past 1000 years. Those people are called “saints.”

Actually the word translated saint means holy one and the Bible uses that word to describe every believer in Jesus Christ.

The reason is because as Philippians 3:9 says we’re *“...found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.”*

The only way we could be righteous or holy enough to be accepted by God is if we’re in Christ. So by faith we’re found in Christ. We don’t have our goodness but we’re covered with Christ’s goodness.

Positionally we’re holy. We’re saints.

So the first aspect of church organization is the saints or the congregation. The second part is the deacons. The word “deacon” actually means servant and the deacons are those who serve the church.

The final aspect is the overseers or elders. Elders are to oversee the church and keep it headed in the right direction. They’re to shepherd the congregation.

New Testament churches weren’t under the leadership of one man. There was always a plurality of elders.

The chief shepherd is Jesus Christ, He’s the head of the church. The elders are to act as undershepherds.

I’ve been to India twice now. Both times I saw shepherds leading their flocks. One thing I never saw was a shepherd driving his flock.

The duty of elders is to lead the congregation by example. They are to shepherd the flock.

So here's Paul telling Titus to get busy appointing elders.

Now, the next 4 verses give the qualifications for these guys. This is what God says has to be present in the lives of men who serve in the position of elder.

Now you might be thinking, "That's nice, but what does this have to do with me? I'm not an elder and never will be."

There are two reasons why this is so important.

First, We don't vote on elders here at FCC but we publicly acknowledge them. That takes place after announcing their name and giving people an opportunity to evaluate their lives and ask any questions they might have.

Obviously you can't evaluate if you don't have any clear standards to use in the evaluation.

But secondly, These should be the standards we all live up to in the church. Obviously when your picking a leader he has to match up to these, but in reality their God's standards for all Christians.

This is the stuff of Christian maturity. This is the nuts and bolts of the Life that honors God.

So as we look at these qualifications, let me challenge you to do a little self evaluation.

God's plan isn't to have spiritual leaders leading an unspiritual congregation. This list is what God wants to produce, character wise, in all of us.

Read vs 6-7a

The first quality is that he is to be blameless, or as NASB puts it "above reproach."

The adjective translated "blameless" literally means "can not be held onto."

In other words, there should be nothing in our lives that can be used to charge us with wrong doing.

Being blameless means you have nothing to hide. You're not always looking over your shoulder worried about your secret life catching up with you.

A person who is blameless isn't plagued by feelings of guilt. Their sins are confessed and forgiven by God. They're not perfect but they keep short accounts with God.

They could go through Senate confirmation hearings and there wouldn't be anything that anyone could bring up that would destroy their reputation.

I think the key to all these qualities in verses 6 through 9 is found in this word blameless.

Isn't that what people are looking for when they watch us to see if our faith is real?

Now let's take a look and see how these other character qualities fit under the heading of blameless.

1. The husband of one wife.

Depending on what translation you're reading from your Bible could say:

"The husband of but one wife."

"Married only once."

"Not polygamous"

"Faithful in marriage."

"Have only one wife."

Actually the translation of the 3 Greek words which make up this phrase isn't that hard. It literally says, "A one woman man."

Now elders are supposed to be men. That's the clear teaching of the New Testament. But remember we said these qualities are for everybody.

Hold place and turn back a few pages to **I Timothy 5:9 pg 1054**

Here's the flip side. Here's the character quality a church should look for in a widow they were going to help financially.

She should be "A one man woman."

As we read these qualities remember all these qualities are in the present tense so we know that whatever "A one woman man" means it has something to do with something

now. Something that can be measured and has been going on long enough that the person has a good reputation.

What I believe this means is what you'd get from a natural reading of the verse.

The requirements for a man serving as an elder is that he be a "One woman man." All of his affections and devotion when it comes to the opposite sex is geared toward his own wife.

If he's not married he's not a womanizer and if he is married, he loves his wife as Christ loves the church.

The same's true for a woman.

If we're going to speak to our generation with any kind of authority we need get this area of our lives in check. The world around us is looking for a faith that has practical implications for their life.

2. Having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination

NIV and NASB translate this a "having believing children." NKJV says "faithful children."

The reason that some translations have "faithful" and others have "believing" is because the Greek adjective *pistos* can have either meaning.

In Paul's letters he uses *pistos* 32 times and only 6 of those times does it mean "believing." The normal meaning is "faithful."

Personally, I think that the usual meaning fits best in this context. The command isn't that our children should be believers, that's something we don't have ultimate control over.

But they are to be faithful children, not accused of being wild or disrespectful. Those are things that parents do have control over.

In the book of I Samuel the Jewish priest Eli had two sons. Both sons were immoral and the Bible says, "They despised the offering of the Lord."

They were called worthless by God and ultimately God judged both Eli and his sons.

And here's why: (I Samuel 3:13) *"For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them."*

A month or so ago we talked about life's button pushers and we looked at what to do when it's our kids who push our buttons.

And we zeroed in on Colossians 3:21 which says, *"Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart."*

We saw that meant:

- a) Don't be so lax that your children have no boundaries
- b) Don't be so overbearing that they feel like they can't move
- c) Don't be inconsistent, so they know what to expect
- d) Don't batter your children with physical or verbal abuse

3. Focused on God not on self **Read vs 7**

The things listed in verse 7 are self focused. Self-willed, quick tempered, a problem with alcohol, violent, greedy.

That's all about us, right. I mean, when we make our life all about us instead of God then these types of things will keep popping up in our lives.

I want what I want so if anybody gets in my way I'll get angry. I'll try to satisfy myself with money and alcohol. It's all about me.

But now look at verse 8

Those are the character qualities of someone who's made God the number 1 priority in their lives.

Back in 1968 the Democratic convention was held in Chicago. Thousands of anti-war protesters tried to disrupt the convention. What eventually happened was Mayor Daley sent in thousands of police, the national guard was mobilized and hundreds of protesters were put in jail.

A lot of the protests were organized by the Weather Underground who were masters at street theater and using the press. So what happened was the media showed the confrontation which looked like police brutality and the Weathermen got what they wanted.

So in the big standoff there was a chant that was repeated by the crowd over and over. "The whole world is watching." And they were right.

Well you know what, the whole world is watching us too. And there's a whole lot of people like Gandhi who would say, "I don't reject your Christ. It's just that so many of you Christians are so unlike your Christ."

The people in our lives are watching us. If we say we have trusted Jesus Christ as Savior they're watching to see how we're going to live.

Read vs 9

Church leaders need to know the Bible. But remember, we said this isn't just about church leaders. These are God's standards for every Christian.

From the leadership on down, when the lives of Christians are in tune with God's purposes, that church is going to be a place that's attractive.

That church is going to be a body of people that others can look at and say, "Those people are for real. Those people have found what I'm looking for in life."

We need to stop excusing ourselves by saying, "Oh well, that's just the way I am," or by evaluating ourselves by that standards of our culture.

When our hearts are right with God our lives will have meaning and fullness and the people around will be drawn to the Savior through us.