

The Truth That Accords with Godliness

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[0 : 00] Open your Bibles up now to Titus chapter 1 and put your card in there so you know where it's up to, your memory verse card, do that right now, that's a good thing to do.

And hopefully over the next little week, few weeks, we'll actually memorise some of those verses in there, that'll be the plan and they might even get a prize for someone who memorises them all, see how you go.

So opening up Titus chapter 1, I love that song we just sung, it's really, really good. I'm going to read out the whole of Titus chapter 1 but we will just be looking at the first four verses this morning.

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began and at the proper time manifested in his word, through the preaching with which I've been entrusted by the command of God our Saviour.

To Titus, my true child in a common faith, grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour. This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

[1 : 38] If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach.

He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.

They must be silent since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.

This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devote themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.

[2 : 50] To the pure, all things are pure. But to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.

They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are testable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. Well, let's spend some time now looking at the first four verses of this book of Titus.

The Roman governor of the first century, Pontius Pilate, is famous for two things, at least two things. Firstly, the trial of Jesus and the washing his hands of the responsibility of the death of Jesus, his crucifixion.

And the second, can you think of it with me? He said, what is truth? That's what he said at the trial of Jesus. Now, similarly today, people are sceptical of the people who claim to know the truth, speak the truth, or are on the side of truth.

It seems that the, it's said that the first casualty of war is truth, and it seems that the first casualty of social media is now truth. With the rise of fake news and doctored photos, who knows what's true anymore?

[4 : 11] What is true for you is true for you, and what's true for me is true for me, even if our ideas are diametrically opposed. I wonder how many times someone has said to you, when you say something comes from the Bible, that they say, well, that's your interpretation.

I've got a different one. It's a powerful way of dismissing any claims of the truth and authority from the scriptures, and it's a powerful way of relativising the truth, saying, well, it doesn't matter too much.

Now, as we come to Titus, we're told that there is truth, and that this truth is an ancient truth, which must be held on to accurately, and not only that, that truth needs to be obeyed, and obeyed, so it will work its way out in how we live in this world.

It's important. Truth is something that's essential to how we function in this world. Without truth, there can be no trust, which is what makes lies so bad.

Lies are corrosive to society, for without trust, life becomes really difficult to live. Deception destroys trust.

[5 : 30] We hear someone say something, and it's getting to the point these days that we actually doubt what we hear. We read something, and we don't know whether to believe it or not.

It depends what part of the paper it comes from. We're sceptical of the politicians. We're sceptical of the news we hear on the TV, and when you buy something from Facebook Marketplace, you don't meet the person at their home, because you're sceptical of what they might do to you.

When you get a phone call from an unknown number, we all get them, don't we? It's getting to the point now that you don't answer your mobile phone, unless that person's name's in your mobile phone, because you think someone's trying to take something from you.

And when you get to go online these days, apparently, even the reputable true websites, we're starting to doubt whether the webpage is actually trustworthy.

You and I both want trust, but where can we find it reliably and consistently today? Now, Christianity, biblical Christianity, is all about the truth, certain foundational truths, which, if they're not true, well, then we are sadly deceived, and we're adrift, really.

[6 : 59] We're lost and without hope. So I want you to talk to the person next to you and tell the person next to you, remind the person next to you, what are some foundational truths that we hold on to in the faith?

Alright, the person next to you. Let's do that. Okay, what have you got?

What are some foundational truths that we hold on to? Over this side, yell at me out. Yeah, Hayden. The Ten Commandments, yeah. There's one God.

Any other foundational truths? Come on. St. Lucia Bible Church, come on. Yes. The resurrection of Jesus is true. Yes, keep going. Yep. Scripture's God breathes.

Scripture's God breathes. Scripture is true. Yes. Hayley. Creation. God created the world. Yes. Jesus is coming again. Yeah. These are all foundational truths, aren't they?

[8 : 00] We hold on to. Yeah. Now, as we come to Titus today, there is something that stands out, which we take for granted, but is actually essential, right?

Did you see how God is described in the first couple of verses there? Our God is the God, verse 2, who never lies.

That is, He always speaks the truth. Now, more of that in a moment. Now, as we turn to Titus, the big picture is that the Apostle Paul's writing to Titus to set things in order in the churches in Crete.

So, here's a bit of a slide. Here's Crete. It's a real place. This stuff really happened. Paul really went to Crete and left Titus there to sort out things in the church.

And so, the question then is, what gives Paul the right to tell Titus to do anything? And the answer is, that God entrusted Paul with the truth.

[9 : 07] God entrusted Paul with the truth. And when you think about that a bit, you begin to see that this is a massive responsibility.

See, Paul is a servant of God. That's the introductory greeting here to Paul in Titus is longer than usual.

This introductory sentence here in the book of Titus is longer than usual and longer than usual greetings Paul gives to others. Which is why we're going to spend an unusually long time in it today.

For Paul is a servant of God, do you see there? Now, not just in the sense of being a humble slave, right? Though it does capture those things which are true.

But it's the only place in Paul's introductions that he calls himself a servant of God. And by Paul calling himself a servant of God, he's actually making some big claims.

[10 : 17] Some really big claims. He's putting himself in the same category, in the same league as Moses, as David, as Joshua.

See, in Deuteronomy chapter 34, we read these verses. So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there at the land of Moab according to the word of the Lord.

In Daniel chapter 9, all Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and the oath that's written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out upon us because they have sinned against him.

Or Joshua 24, after these things, Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being 110 years old. Or Psalm 18, and in many other places, to the choir master, a psalm of David, the servant of the Lord.

That's the way the Old Testament uses the phrase, servant of God or servant of the Lord. That's the most common way it's used. Not only that, it's also the way that a particular office is spoken about in the Scriptures.

[11 : 27] The office, let me tell you, of prophet. In 2 Kings chapter 9, and many other places refer to the prophets. Read 2 Kings chapter 9.

Did you hear it?

And Jeremiah 25, come to Jeremiah 25, I've got the screen hopefully behind me. Jeremiah 25 says this. Turn now every one of you from his evil way and evil deeds and dwell upon the land.

That the Lord has given me and you and your fathers from of old and forever. A prophet is someone who speaks the very word of God. And calls people to live in obedience to the word of God.

And ultimately, we know that Jesus was the servant of the Lord. And Isaiah 42 verse 1, you can read about it. So not only Jeremiah, but John also, in the New Testament, speaks about the servant of the Lord to refer to prophets.

[13 : 01] In Revelation 10 verse 7. So God's servants are the prophets.

And Paul wants us to know that he's not only a slave of God, but even more than that, what he writes, what he preaches, what he teaches, are actually prophetic words of God.

And it's God's revealed word, God's powerful word coming from Paul. Who's also an apostle of Christ Jesus.

He acts with the authority of someone who sent him. That's what apostle means. He was commissioned by the risen Lord Jesus. Having seen the risen Lord Jesus in Acts chapter 9, Paul's commissioned by him to be the apostle to the Gentiles.

We read about that in Romans chapter 11 and 1 Timothy 2. He is our apostle. We only have one apostle. We better listen to him. He's the apostle to the Gentiles.

[14 : 14] Now, the apostles died out when the last of the apostles died in the first century. Even though some falsely claim to be apostles today. There's a movement that's been around for a while now called the New Apostolic Reformation of the Church.

With self-proclaimed apostles who claim to bring fresh words from God. And so these self-proclaimed apostles cannot be challenged in what they say.

Nor do they have to have the Bible in their churches because they are revealing God's word. And people in churches with self-styled so-called apostles should tell them actually that they are hypocritical liars and remove them from their churches.

Or else those churches will have their households ruined. Now, my question to you is this. Didn't Titus already know that Paul was an apostle?

Why did Paul have to tell him, hey, Titus, guess what? I'm an apostle. Why did he have to do that? I mean, wasn't Titus the primary example of a Gentile who was saved by faith in Christ Jesus?

[15 : 37] Didn't he know that? He was a key minister in the church in Corinth. Remember, he was not compelled to be circumcised in order to be saved.

Why then does Paul need to tell him about himself? And so the conclusion that I come to, and not just me alone, but many before me is this.

This letter is not just meant for Titus to read by himself, by himself, in his bed at night time. Right? But it's meant for others to have heard and to read as well.

I mean, the very last line in Titus chapter 3, verse 15. Have a look at it with me. Titus chapter 3, verse 15. All those who are with me send greetings to you.

Right? That's singular. You alone, Titus. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.

[16 : 37] Plural. He's writing to everyone. Who's the everyone? Well, I take it as the people in Crete hear what Titus has been told, they actually get to read the very letter that Titus has themselves.

They would see what Titus is saying is actually the very word of God that they need to hear and obey as well. And they will see that they need to hear what God is saying.

And what Titus is saying is what God is saying. Which then means that when the churches in Crete hear what Paul writes to Titus, they should be all the more willing to obey what Titus says.

And not only that, as we read what Titus has heard and been written to, we need to hear and obey as well. What's foundational to the churches in Crete is foundational to all the churches.

And we have another reason to listen to what Paul says. Because what he says is also according to the faith of the elect. Now that's an important phrase.

[17 : 55] Paul's very being, his prophetic word, his apostolic commissioning is in accordance, right?

It says here for the sake, is in accordance with the faith of God's elect. What he writes is good for them, yes, the people there in the faith of the elect, yes.

But it's infinitely important, more important, that it's in agreement, lines up with, is literally in accordance with the faith of those that God has chosen.

It's in accordance with the faith of God's chosen people, who in the first instance are? Israel. Israel. Now that's pretty important.

Let me put it to you. Biblical Christianity is actually in alignment with true Judaism. Faith in the Lord Jesus actually accords with the faith of true Israel.

[19 : 09] What Abraham believed, the apostle Peter believed and preached at Pentecost.

What Isaac believed, the Lord Jesus believed and preached throughout his life. What Jacob believed, the servant of Paul believed and proclaimed all over the world.

What Paul preaches is not a different religion to the religion of true Israel. What Paul preaches is the fulfillment of the true religion of Israel.

That Jesus is the Christ. The long-awaited, anticipated, eternal King of Israel is Jesus. That through him, blessing comes to the world.

That through him, countless multitudes of people will become the children of Abraham. That through him comes the eternal kingdom of God, where everything is absolutely perfect.

[20 : 20] And this accords with the teaching of God's chosen people, the Jews. If only they would believe it.

And now not only the Jews, but all those who have been chosen are called to be members of God's household. They are the elect. We are the elect.

Both Jews and Gentiles are to believe the same truth. And in one short phrase, that truth is this. Jesus is the Christ.

Christ. Or in another short phrase, Jesus is Lord. And so, in chapters 2, verse... Come to chapter 2, verse 14 with me.

This is one of our... From another angle. We're going to try and memorise a bit more than 2, verse 14. But have a look at chapter 2, verse 14. Have a look at chapter 2, verse 14. God, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, to redeem us from all lawlessness, and to purify for himself a people for his very own possession, who are zealous for good works.

[21 : 33] That is the truth. That is the faith of Israel. Well, Jesus Christ, who is none other, no less than God himself, gave himself, dying in our place for me and for my sins and for the sins of the world on the cross, to redeem us, to buy us back, to purchase us, to rescue us from the consequences and the penalty for our rebellion against God.

And to purify for himself. Cleanse the people who now belong to him, who are going to be zealous for good works.

And this is a verse that's going to be good to try and memorise, this section, so we'll see how we get. We'll see if we get a prize for the people who learn this one over time. Might be a book off the bookstore.

The truth is, we are saved to do good works. We don't do good works to get saved. And it's through Paul that we come then to a knowledge of the truth there, right?

So Paul, a servant of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect, and their knowledge of the truth, which accords now with godliness. The truth actually accords with godliness.

[22 : 56] If you want to know the truth, then what we hear from Paul is truth. It's no lie. And those in Crete need to know that what Paul says is true.

Too many people these days want to say, well, they know better than Paul. That his word's faulty. It's just man's word. We know better than him now. He was misogynist.

We're not. But actually what Paul writes, preachers taught, actually reveals the truth and brings us to a knowledge of the truth. And it accords with godliness.

It lines up with godliness. Now, here's the thing. Godliness, this is going to be, let's just try and wrestle with this one for a minute or two, right?

This is going to be hard work, right? But worth doing, okay? Godliness doesn't equal goodness, right?

[23 : 56] When you think of the opposite, it helps us to understand, right, what godliness is. The opposite of godliness, what's the opposite of godliness?

Godlessness, right? Godlessness, right? The opposite of godly is godless.

Those with godliness. Godliness, right? Those with godliness are godly. Those without god in their lives are godless.

All right? Now, all too often we just add an O to the word and say it's the same, but it's not. Being good is commendable. I'm all for people being good. Don't get me wrong.

But who determines what the good is? Good is not necessarily godly.

[25 : 07] A person who appears to be quite good and moral can be actually totally godless. Godless.

Godless. Godless. Godless. They don't worship the true and living God. And so they're not godly at all. They are living without God and without hope in this world.

That's where they are. Godliness is actually the life that is aligned with God's gospel. Godliness actually agrees with what God is doing in the world.

Godliness is God reaching down to us. 1 Timothy 3, verse 16 is a key place. We'll get it up on the screen, hopefully. If it's not there, get it up and your Bible's up. 1 Timothy 3, verse 16 is a key place to get a good definition of godliness.

You got it? Here we go. 1 Timothy 3, verse 16. Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness. So here it is. Here's the definition of godliness.

[26 : 46] He was manifest in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on the Lord, in the world, sorry, taken up in glory.

There you go. The truth that Paul preaches is all about Jesus, who was crucified, then appeared in the flesh, risen from the dead on the third day. That's manifest in the flesh.

He was proven to be the Christ by the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Messengers, angels saw him. The message that the Christ has been and come continues to be preached, proclaimed among the nations.

That was proclaimed then and continues to be proclaimed now. Many have believed and continue to believe. Then he ascended to glory, right? Taken up into glory, to reign at the right hand of the Father, until he returns again.

And it's godliness that has great power. Power to transform lives. This message has the power to transform lives. As people go, yes, Jesus is the Christ.

[27 : 55] He did rise from the dead. He now reigns in glory and will return on the last day. And people go, yeah, that's true. And that's what changes lives.

Makes people godly. Paul's apostleship is all about knowing the truth, which accords with the faith of Israel and accords with the coming of Jesus into the world and his rise into glory, which proves that Jesus is the Christ.

Now, let me tell you, the gods of this world don't really care about goodness and Christian morality.

The gods of this world don't. If you live like the gods of this world, the values of these gods, which are actually not gods at all, what are the gods of this world?

God, power, greed and sex. They're basically the three gods of our age. Then living for these gods is going to be seen as completely normal by those who follow these gods.

[29 : 01] And we can't but help see this shape our society all around about us. And so sexual immorality is seen as good.

But our God, who never lies, would say that it's not. Unfettered, unloving power is seen as great by the gods of this world.

But not by our God, who doesn't lie. And on it goes. Which then brings us to the God of truth.

The great truth that our God never lies is a really, really, really good thing. It means that what he says can be relied upon.

It means that what he says, he would, we can take his promises to the bank. Right? You can call on his promises and they will never let you down.

[30 : 10] They'll never let me down. He will always be true to his character. The true and living God never lies. However, the evil one, Satan is the father of lies and his native language is lies.

Our father is the true and living God. And then being like him will mean that we won't lie. We won't be liars. We won't be deceivers.

We won't be trying to make people believe things that aren't true. Will we? Because we follow the true and living God who never lies. There were Roman gods who lied.

Dollos, Pate, Fros. I know nothing about them really. Other than that they were liars. That was one of the pantheons in their gods. There are Hindu gods who lie.

Krishna and many others. I know nothing about them other than that those who follow them think they play tricks on them and appear in different forms to pretend that they are who they are and what they're not.

[31 : 20] If your gods are gods who lie how can you ever know them? How can you ever trust them?

How can you ever rely on them for anything? What kind of a relationship could you have with gods who lie? The good news is that a true and living holy creator God never lies.

And knowing this truth sets us free from deception and gives us knowledge and a certain hope of eternal life that we can take to the bank.

It's a great thing that our God is the God who never lies. we can be confident what he promises he will do. We need not fear the future nor be anxious about our relationship with him.

We can know where we stand with him. Now God's promises began before the ages began.

[32 : 36] Our hope of eternal life is not based on our goodness. our hope of eternal life is based on the faith and the body of teaching that goes way back to Abraham. Our hope is based on the promises that God made to Abraham that if we believe and rely and trust in God we are credited we are being right with God but they go back further than that.

God promised these things before the ages began. See the gospel of Jesus is not God's plan B after plan A went bad with the garden. God's plan to save the world through the risen Lord Jesus Christ was promised before the ages began.

You're going to ask me who to? Well to us who would believe. He made those promises and I think he promised himself that he would do it as well.

I'm going to do this and he remembers his promises and carries through on his promises and we can be confident that we would have eternal life because it's God's promise who never lies.

If he did it would be a mess wouldn't it? If he did we would be hopelessly lost. And as we look to our eternal life and mull over all that it means it changes us.

[34 : 00] It's got to change us. It turns us from looking to the world to give us what we could want. It turns us to looking towards heaven where every good and perfect gift comes from and gives us a real certain hope for the future.

we won't apply our minds, our dreams, our desires to Godliness, to living for Jesus unless, until we are certain of the hope of eternal life in glory and heaven grips us.

When that does, everything will change about our aspirations and plans and purposes in this world. Our knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness in the hope of eternal life, which God had promised never lies before the age began, has been revealed at the proper time.

Notice how? Through preaching. Through the preaching. It's by the preaching of the word that was entrusted to Paul that the knowledge of the truth is made known to a world, is manifested in this world.

God himself gives Paul the word to preach, God himself commanded Paul to preach, Christ is Lord. Paul didn't take on the job himself, he didn't make up the message himself, God gave it to him, entrusted it to him, commanded him to preach it.

[35 : 37] To do otherwise would have been disobedient to the one who called him to himself. It's the proclamation of the word that was entrusted to Paul by God that gives us the knowledge of the truth.

God reveals the truth through the preaching of Paul and our knowledge of God comes through the teaching and the preaching and the understanding that Paul brings. And so it's evident that Titus has believed the truth.

Titus has got the truth. We don't know a lot about Titus. It's evident he was a Gentile who came to faith in Christ. He's one of Paul's co-workers, key helpers, but even more than that, Paul calls him a true child in the faith, according to the common the same faith.

Even though Titus was a Gentile and Paul was a Jew, Paul was his father in the faith of the Lord Jesus, brought him to know the truth.

And they both believe the same thing, it's a common thing, and they both have the same heavenly father, even though one is Jew and one is Gentile, they both are now members of the same family.

[36 : 53] And notice also they both have the same status, they have both been saved, right? Saved from living in rebellion against God, saved from facing the wrath of God, both Paul and Titus, that was their fate until God brought them, called them, saved them.

And you notice here, we'll dwell on it some more later on, but here's one of the clearest references in the scriptures to Jesus being God.

See verse three, God's our saviour, and then in verse four, Jesus Christ is our saviour. So the syllogism is being that Jesus is God.

Titus is committed to the truth, for it's only by his standing in the truth that he'll be able to do what Paul asked him. He's in Crete, to put what remained in order and to appoint elders in every town, and we'll dive into that more next week.

But for now, the bottom line is that truth accords with godliness. And if we're going to live godly lives, we need to have a growing knowledge of the truth.

[38 : 09] And as our lives align with God's truth, we will grow in godliness. The fruit of godliness will be lives that are lived in accordance with God's word.

And the truth will confront the way that I live in this world, it will continue to turn my life upside down. And not only that, the truth is a great comfort, isn't it?

Because whatever this world throws at me, I know that I'm a child of God. God who never lies has promised me that.

And I know that I've been saved by the finished work of Jesus Christ at the cross. God who never lies has promised me that.

And I know that I've been given the sure hope of eternal life because God who never lies has promised me that.

[39 : 09] let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you that you are a gracious God, the God who never lies.

Help us to trust your truth that your son, the Lord Jesus, is the Christ, the one who gave his life, his precious life, God who will to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself his own people for his own possession.

Help us to be continually transformed by these truths things to live like you and have these priorities in our lives.

Thank you that you are the one who never lies and for the certain great promises that you will keep, the great hope of eternal life. And we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.