

From Pagan to Pastor: Titus

By Matthew Black, Pastor

Text: Titus 1:1-4

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Series: Titus

Tabernacle Baptist Church

7020 Barrington Road

Hanover Park, Illinois 60133

Website: www.GodCentered.info

Introduction: Open your Bible tonight to **Titus 1:1-4**. Tonight we are beginning a study on the book of Titus, and I want to simply give you an account of the life of Titus, who he was and how God can take a person who seems useless and worthless, and turn them into something for His glory.

Before we begin with Titus, I want to tell you about John Newton. We know him as the author of the hymn, "Amazing Grace". Newton is proof that God can save absolutely anybody. Newton grew up knowing the Gospel well. By age seven, Newton had such a fantastic memory that he had the entire Westminster Smaller Catechism memorized.

Sadly, his mother died of Tuberculosis, an infection of the lungs, when he was seven. She was 27.

By the time John was 17, with his father being a sea captain, young John had already been just under the rank of an officer when he was pressed into military service. He deserted twice and was publically flogged and sent to work on a slave boat. He went into the slave trading business. Interestingly, he there was falsely accused, lost any status he had, and became the slave to an African princess, named PI, and her slave trading husband. Newton nearly died of starvation there. This is all by the time he was 17 years old.

From there he somehow was freed and later became the captain of a slave ship. He was a blasphemer, very immoral, and had no regard for the precious human beings he enslaved.

During one night he picked up a copy of Thomas Aquinas' "Imitation of Christ". Fear came over him for the first time in his life, thinking, "What if this is all true?" The next night the ship Newton was in a terrible storm, and Newton, for the first time in his life began to pray.

For the next probably ten years, Newton went back and forth between praying and living a sinful life. He thought various times that if anyone had tred underfoot the blood of the Son of God and become an apostate, it was him.

But God did save him. And he was radically changed! Even though he had before become an infamous atheist among the shipmen and a terrible blasphemer and fornicator, and a slave trader—one of the most vile men on earth—God saved a wretch like John Newton and called him into the ministry.

I want you to know that God is in the business of turning sinners into saints. That is what tonight's message is all about. It is a message of hope.

John Newton found nothing within him to change himself. But God, like the Good Shepherd that He is, brought Newton to so many places of desperation and at the right time, turned the light on for him.

God did the same thing for a man named Titus.

Titus 1:1-4, "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; 2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; 3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour; 4 To Titus, *mine* own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour."

I hope by the grace of God, soon to preach through the book of Titus. But in reading through the New Testament, there is such an amazing account of his life, that we need to begin by looking at the life of this Gentile, that God turned into a preacher of the Gospel.

Before we get into what Paul wrote to Titus, we want to look at the story of this man's life. We have in Titus, the Gospel that Jesus and Paul preached, displayed in great glory. This is A. W. Tozer's outline.

- Titus the man
 - Titus the Christian
 - Titus the assistant to the Apostle
 - Titus the missionary
 - Titus the practical and self-motivated leader
 - Titus the organizer
 - Titus the encourager
- I. Let's first look at Titus the **man**. Titus was not a Jew. He was of Greek descent. He had a Roman name. Later there would be an emperor named Titus, who would destroy the Jewish Temple in 70AD. So Titus had a Roman, gentile name.
- A. Titus was a native of Antioch in Asia minor where the strong, aggressive missionary church (**Acts 11, 13**). In **Acts** chapter **11** and **13**, you'll find that the Antioch church was not founded by Paul, but Paul preached often in that church and highly respected there.
- B. After Stephen was put to death as the first martyr at the feet and authority of Saul of Tarsus, we learn that the believers were scattered abroad to many places, one of which they congregated was Antioch (**Acts 11:19**). Through the fervent faith these believers had in the midst of this persecution, a great number of people turned to the Lord from many nations. There were a good number of elders and teachers in this church. They became known for their missionary endeavors.
- C. So though Titus was born a pagan, God's providence led the Jewish Christians under persecution after Stephen's death to flee to Antioch and establish a church where Titus eventually heard and believed the Gospel.
- D. Titus in his early life would have been a polytheistic Roman, we can assume. Titus was likely a worshipper of Zeus and Jupiter. Titus was probably a religious man, though his religion was pagan.

E. Interestingly, Titus came into contact with Paul the Apostle. I want you to consider providence. It wasn't too long before that Paul the Apostle was Saul the Pharisee who stood as the judge in Stephen's death that drove the Christians all over, and they gathered among other places at Antioch. Now Saul was saved and is now Paul and enlists Stephen to help him! What a God we serve that can pluck us up where we are and use us for His purposes.

Application: We can give thanks in all things, can't we? What was a persecution from the devil's perspective was a church planting effort from God's perspective.

William Law said, "...[the] shortest, surest way to all happiness... [is] to make it a rule to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you. For it is certain that whatever seeming calamity befalls you, if you can thank and praise God for it you will turn it into a blessing."

We should be so glad that this pagan man with a Roman name and a Greek family met this former Hebrew Pharisee who was now converted to Christ.

II. Now we turn to Titus the **Christian**. So Titus was converted. We can guess by the time frame and stature of Titus with Paul that Titus's conversion must have been revolutionary and instantaneous. We see this in **Galatians 2:1**. Paul says, speaking of the Jerusalem council of **Acts 15**, "I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also."

John Wesley said that "conversion is instantaneous but sanctification is progressive". Christianity is both instantaneous and progressively. We are filled with the Spirit at the new birth, and we are commanded to keep on being filled.

A. Titus was extremely quick to grasp spiritual truth. We know this because within one year of Titus's conversion, he established himself so clearly with the Apostle Paul in the congregation of Antioch that when they sent up two delegates to the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, the church picked Paul (which would have been natural), but they also picked a man who had been converted only one year: Titus. Though he was in the faith only a year, he was not a novice. His faith and growth skyrocketed, and he must have been terribly busy that year gaining experience in the Christian faith. So, Titus, as a convert of one year, was chosen to go to the first and perhaps most important council of the Christian church.

B. **Application:** Titus wholeheartedly threw himself into the things of God. For some Christians, it takes them years to become established and mature in the faith. Others take off immediately. You know that you are maturing as a Christian when you are dependable and the saints begin to trust you and go to you for counsel. Are you a Titus? Are you a Christian that is devouring the Word and getting Christian experience in this present dark world? Are you shining the light for other Christians, and to the lost?

How is it that this young man could be saved and within one year be the companion of an apostle and a delegate to a foundational council for Christ's church.

But we know that often God does not call those who we think He should call. He does not call the eminently qualified or brilliant people. God calls the John Newtons and the John Bunyans and the Tituses of this earth.

III. Now we turn to Titus was an **assistant** to the Apostle. I imagine that Paul was probably not easy to work with. Paul expected everyone to be just as devoted as he was. He expected a Christian to have burnt their bridges to the old life. If they didn't seem committed, Paul was disappointed. Remember John Mark, when things got hard, he wanted to quit. Paul would have nothing of it. Barnabas and Paul had an argument. Barnabas and John Mark were relatives. But of course you know, John Mark became a companion of the Apostle Peter, and he wrote what most pastors refer to as "Peter's Gospel", that is the Gospel of Mark. Paul, later in life had forgiven John Mark and saw that he was profitable for the ministry. But I think it took a lot of years to gain confidence back in John Mark, but he finally did.

A. Titus acted as Paul's **representative**. When Paul couldn't go somewhere he would leave Titus. He took him with to Jerusalem. He sent him to Crete to organize the church there. He sent him to Dalmatia and to Corinth. You can see that Titus must have been some man. When you read the book of 2 Corinthians, you will see that Titus went over there for a time to that struggling church, and he was very profitable for the Apostle.

Application: I have to ask you, are you the type of person that the leadership of this church can count on? Are you mature? Are you doing the work of the ministry?

Ephesians 4:11-12 tell us that the leaders and teachers of the church are to train the believers for the work of ministry. Pastors and teachers don't have the contact that lay people have with unbelievers. You've got to be one who is trustworthy, doing the work of the ministry, if you are a mature Christian. Are you the one always bringing friends with you to church? Are you the one witnessing whenever the opportunity is available? Are you a Titus?

B. **Paul**, the old ex-Pharisee, who before his conversion was himself a self-righteous Pharisee of the Pharisees. He would never have shaken hands with a Gentile dog like Titus. But God met Paul on the Damascus Road, and transformed him, and put Christ in him, and made him to love Titus as his "own son after the common faith" (**Titus 1:4**). The grace of God will transform people.

IV. Now we see Titus the **Missionary**. We know that he went to Jerusalem and to Macedonia, and to Crete, and to Corinth. Missionary work then was not as difficult as it is today. God did an amazing thing with the conquering of Alexander the Great. Everyone was taught to learn Greek in the years coming to Christ's birth. By the time of Paul the Apostle, for the most part everyone almost spoke Greek. So they could preach in one language.

Now there are probably 5000 or more languages, and you have to spend years learning the language. Titus was sent by Paul to one of the most difficult places, Crete. We call someone today with no manners a Cretan. That comes from the book of Titus. He went to the most narcissistic culture and was told to convert the city and ordain elders.

Titus 1:5, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee".

Application: Do you understand what Titus and what you and I are to do? We are to find the Cretans of this world, introduce them to Christ who will transform them. Then they are to grow in Christ and some will be ordained and gifted to be elders. God wants to do that with Cretans.

V. Titus the **Practical and Self-motivated Leader**. The one God uses has to be one who has been forgiven much because people are like stubborn sheep. Sheep and people are self centered and go astray always. Titus noticed the Corinthian church was happy and fat and satisfied. They were rich and well to do. The saints at Jerusalem were poor and destitute and starving.

A. The poor saints in Jerusalem needed financial help. The elders at Corinth should have seen this. But they weren't thinking about Jerusalem. Titus knew Jerusalem was an important place. Jerusalem was where Christ was crucified and rose again. It is where Christianity began. Jerusalem was where Pentecost took place, and it was the center out from which the message of the Gospel first began. Yet before the end of the first century. Around 65AD, the church of Jerusalem had gotten so poor that they needed the Gentiles' help. The Jewish authorities confiscated the Christian's property. They couldn't get good jobs. They were persecuted!

2 Corinthians 8:1-6, "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. 3 For to [beyond] their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; 4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift [OFFERING], and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." Look at verse 6, "Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also."

Now look what Titus did in **verses 16-19**. It says God put a burden on Titus's heart to go to Corinth and take up an offering for the Jerusalem saints. "But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. 17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. 18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; 19 And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord..."

The Corinthian church, according to the commentators, was a well to do church. They had money. Titus went there to stir them up to give.

In my study, one man said Titus wanted to kill two birds with one stone. **He wanted to kill poverty in Jerusalem and kill stinginess in Corinth.** Can you imagine the strife in Corinth that could have arisen. I can imagine an old deacon rising up in objection and saying, "Those people in Jerusalem are Jews, and they think we are dirt!" Titus would have brought to them the truth that all who are in Christ are neither Jew or Gentile, but one in Christ. And for that matter, we are all Jews, spiritually speaking as Paul said.

Application: Titus was self-motivated. He took the offering on his own accord. I've heard some of you complain to me about the Spanish church, and I've gotten the sense that some may think I've spent too much time ministering to them. I do not apologize for that. I know that the last five months I've been over burdened with running the construction of this small place for them to meet.

It is during these times when the pastor has a lot on his plate that the mature among us need to step up. Each of us has to be self-motivated like Titus. I am called to shepherd this church, but not to coddle it. If you need coddling, go to the

Lord Jesus Christ. Call out to Him like a little child, as we all do. He will answer you. He doesn't want you depending on me. I can feed you a fish or teach you how to fish. I pray you will learn to go to God on your own and be self-motivated in your walk with Christ.

So Titus took a huge offering for Corinth. He did this of "his own accord". He was self-motivated! He was a leader! A leader must be self-motivated! Titus was practical. He had a heart for God, but he took that heart and put overalls on it! He travelled long distances because he knew the saints in Jerusalem were hungry. Do you see the needs of the saints around you?

- VI. Titus the **organizer**. Titus went to Corinth and helped to straighten out that church. Paul sent Titus to Crete to organize the church there. **Titus 1:5**, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee".

Illustration (Paul Washer): Thank God for organizers. I got a flyer in the mail this week from HeartCry Missionary Society, founded by Bro. Paul Washer. Bro. Paul is a fantastic organizer, but he leads and organizes by the power of the Spirit and direction of the Lord.

Illustration (John Calvin): We think of Luther and Calvin as great teachers. They were. John Knox, John Wesley. They were amazing exegetes, but they were also organizers. During Calvin's life, he helped in the founding of 2000 churches. Don't ever tell me that Calvinists don't evangelize!! My brother John Calvin evangelized more than any of his current detractors!!!

Titus was trustworthy enough to be asked by Paul to be an organizer. That takes time. It takes time with people, training them. Are you that kind of person?

Titus could walk into a disorganized, messed up church like Corinth and bring it into order!

- VII. Titus the **encourager**. Paul says something amazing about this Gentile son in the faith Titus, in **2 Corinthians 2:13**, "I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia".

When Titus was around, he was always encouraging people. You have no idea how much a little kind word will go. If it is sincere, it gets chewed on for weeks and months and years, and even a lifetime.

Conclusion: Titus went from Pagan to preacher.

We saw:

- Titus the man
- Titus the Christian
- Titus the assistant to the Apostle
- Titus the missionary
- Titus the practical and self-motivated leader
- Titus the organizer
- Titus the encourager

